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**MAKERS OF NEW HINDUSTAN SERIES**

**PUBLISHED**

**BRAHMARSHI KESHUB CHUNDER SEN**

**BY**

**MANILAL C. PAREKH, B.A.**

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# RAJARSHI RAM MOHAN ROY



BY

**MANILAL C. PAREKH, B.A.,**

*Author of "Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen"*

*and Joint-author with R. M. Gray*

*of "Mahatma Gandhi."*



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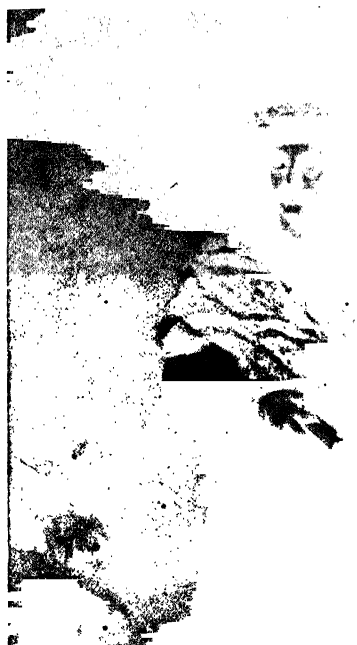
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RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

**To  
The New Hindustan  
with  
All its sons and daughters  
of whatever faith,  
Vedic, Moslem or Christian,  
this life of  
Rajarshi Ram Mohan, .  
its first father and  
as one in whom all these faiths  
have united as in none else,  
is lovingly inscribed.**



## P R E F A C E

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Ever since the great Hindu Scripture—*Bhagwada Gita*—came to be written, or since long before that, it has been the general experience of the Hindu Race that whenever a most critical time comes in the history of a nation or people, God Almighty provides a MAN. Men of this type are variously described as Heroes, Great Men, Prophets, or Incarnations. Whether the appearance of such men be a fact of universal history or not, it holds true to a large extent in regard to the history of the Indo-Aryan or the Hindu Civilization. This is because it is based on spiritual verities, and it is also due to the same cause that while most of the ancient civilizations have passed away, this has maintained its existence, power and influence in spite of all the vicissitudes it has undergone during ages. But this is not all. There has been a development in the inner life of this Race, because owing to the same spiritual bias it has always welcomed light, whatever source it might come from. Thus not only crises have been overcome successfully in its long history, but usually they have been the means of carrying the nation on its onward march to its destiny chosen for it by Providence.

Such a crisis presented itself to the people of India about a century and half back. The condition of the country then was as bad as it could be in every phase of life. Both the Hindus and Moslems were in a decadent state, and a new power was rising which was alien in the full sense of the term, alien in customs, manners, civilization, culture, religion, in fact in everything. It came from far, crossing the oceans—the black waters—



which had stood so long for all that was forbidding. The conquest of a sub-continent like Hindustan by a mere handful of people who came not as settlers but as mere traders from so great a distance is the truest index of its degraded and fallen condition at that time. This alien power brought with it what was nothing less than a new world, even the modern world. By the time we are speaking of the West had definitely entered a new sphere of existence, *viz.*, that of religious, social and political liberty and of the developments of Physical Science. The great problem for India and the whole of the East was how to take these in order to come out of medieval twilight, if not darkness, into the modern world. This was not all. There was danger on the other side as well. India lay between the Scylla of blind and bigoted conservatism which would have nothing to do with whatever might come from the West, and the Charibdis of spurious imitation of and cultural conquest by the West. This involved thorough-going religious and social reform as well as nation-building in every phase of it. It was the work of a pioneer in the largest and best sense of the term. To the great good fortune of this land it did find a man of this type in Raja Ram Mohan Roy who has been justly and almost universally recognized as the Father of Modern India. The entire New Hindustan that we know to-day and much more was in his mind a hundred years ago and with a prophetic vision he foretold all that we see to-day. It was of such a New India that he laid the foundation, deep and strong, in those early days. For the beginnings of our social reform, political agitation, educational work and journalistic activity we have to go back to him. But his

chief work was in the domain of religion where he rendered services of abiding worth not only to his own race but to the whole of Humanity.

As a religious reformer of Hinduism his position is unique among his countrymen, and though he was a thorough-going iconoclast all his life, to-day all schools of thought vie with one another in doing honour to him. His is the one name which stands above the clouds of controversy and sectarian prejudices and already he is recognised as a great *Acharya*. His many Bengali writings and English translations of the Upanishads, etc., show him to be not only a very eminent Sanskrit scholar but a man filled with burning zeal for the reform of many abuses that had crept in among his people. His spiritual descent he traces to Vyas, Yagnavalkya, Manu and Shankaracharya, and indeed he is a worthy successor of theirs. He is also related to such teachers as Kabir, Nanak and Dadu, and perhaps he belongs more to these than to the former, for though he is not an eclectic as such, there is a strong eclectic strain in him. Whatever it be, Raja Ram Mohan will find an abiding place in the heart of the Hindu Race as a great teacher and sage, an *Acharya* and a *Rishi*. He is the *Rajarshi* of our times. He has breathed forth the great *Mantra* of *Ekmevadwityam*, one without a Second, and has preached the spiritual worship of the Spirit-God alone with an insistence and enthusiasm almost unrivalled in our times, and so long as idolatry, polytheism and religious abuses remain, the spirit of Ram Mohan will continue to work. Although he established the Brahma Samaj and it came to be the premier religious movement of New Hindustan, it does not

represent the whole of him and as in the case of his great successor, Keshub Chunder Sen, he belongs at least as much to the generality of Hindus as to the Brahmas.

But it is not the Hindus alone who may claim him as their own. The Mohammedans may well be proud of the fact that this great Hindu religious reformer drew his first inspiration for Monotheism and iconoclastic zeal from the Koran : that he was not only always well disposed towards Mohammedans and the Moslem faith but his knowledge of Islam was so deep that he was known by many among them as a "*jabardast moulvie*", i.e. a great religious teacher : that some of his ideas regarding social life such as the evils of caste-system, the necessity of giving woman a share in inheritance and probably his hatred against the evil custom of Suttee were drawn from his acquaintance with Islam : and that he intended writing a Life of Mohammad for whom he cherished much reverence. Even his style of living was to a certain extent influenced by that prevailing among high-class Moslems. In all probability much of the social aspect of his religion, which is a new thing in comparison with a great deal of medieval and even earlier Hinduism, was due to his knowledge of this faith. Perhaps no other Hindu of his eminence either before or since his time has been able to harmonize the spirit of both Hinduism and Islam in his life and work to the same extent as he and therein lies his uniqueness.

This does not exhaust the international and inter-religious significance of his life and work. Perhaps his knowledge of and love for Islam was only a preparation for his understanding of Unitarian Christianity and

profound reverence for Christ Jesus. It was in the "Precepts of Jesus" that he found the pearl of great price that he was seeking all his life and he lost no time in revealing it to all, Christians and non-Christians alike. In Unitarianism he found almost the last word in Religion, and as such he did all in his power to preach it to his countrymen and to protect it against those who, he thought, were mistaken in their Christian belief. He wished for its final success and prevalence all over Europe and America. It was no wonder the Unitarians in his own time came to look upon him as one of their great teachers and they have done so ever since. Even the orthodox Christians have since come to regard him as one led by the Spirit of Christ and the feeling has grown among them that the missionaries and Church authorities of his time were too bigoted to understand him aright. It was only in the normal atmosphere of England that he came to see orthodox Christianity at its best and appreciate it more and more and was appreciated in return by the people there. The Christians in this land are bound to be most grateful to God for the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy. Those who look beneath the surface know that there are two movements simultaneously going on, the Hindu-Christian movement and the Christian-Hindu movement, and both these are ultimately to combine in the Hindu Church of Christ, the only Church of Christ possible in Hindustan. Of this Hindu Church our Rajarshi is the first father, followed in the wise economy of Divine Providence by another, *viz.*, Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen, and it is only to the extent that the Christians, *i.e.*, the Hindu disciples of Christ, are spiritual successors of these two, albeit

going further than they in their appreciation of and love for both Hinduism and Christianity, that they instead of being poor pale copies of other people will be themselves in the truest sense of the term and will have a great deal to contribute not only to the life of Hindustan but even to that of the world. Providence has been preparing this land for a great destiny for the last five thousand years and both Ram Mohan and Keshub are the legitimate successors of all the great teachers and sages who came before them and as such they not only sum up the past to a certain extent in their lives but point to a new future in the new world into which we are ushered. It is through them that the New Hindustan of which they are the two chief makers is organically related to the best in the world and consequently the Hindu Culture which is so largely spiritual will enter into the life of the rest of the world and the best outside will enter into the inner life of Hindustan to the permanent enrichment of the whole of Humanity.

Thus at the opening of this New Era or *Yuga* stands the royal figure of Ram Mohan athwart the skies of New Hindustan. It is indeed a figure of large dimensions. Few men since his time have been so deep and broad at the same time. Stately in physical appearance, he is more so in his mental and moral build. His manifold writings, both in Bengali and in English, present a massive front and reveal a personality remarkable for high and earnest thinking and moral passion of a high order : his whole personality is glowing with the light of deep religious conviction and fervour. The two most prominent features of his character are his love of Truth and love of Liberty. The first appears in his "researches

after truth" which led him to study religion after religion in a way but few have done and which has earned him from eminent scholars of both the East and the West the title of "the first really earnest investigator in the science of comparative theology." His was the truest *Satyagraha*. His love of liberty has not only been unsurpassed but it has not been even equalled since his time in India. This was not merely an intellectual belief with him but a moral passion. It had become concrete in his deep love for his country and behind it there was throbbing a big heart which felt deeply the woes of the Suttee, the widow and the womankind, the Indian agriculturists and Irish peasants, in fact all suppressed and depressed people of whatever race and country. In addition to these two loves of his, there is heroism of a high kind in him and he never flinched from what he considered to be his duty to his country or to the cause of Truth. More than once he put his life in danger while working on behalf of the Suttee, and almost ever since his early youth to the very end of his life he suffered petty persecutions of all sorts from his own people and serious antagonism from orthodox people among both Hindus and Christians. Added to all these qualities of head and heart, hand and spirit, there is even a strain of poetry in him and he is said to have written a few fine hymns. Thus altogether he is a figure great and remarkable in many ways, and if the outlines thereof become clearer to ever so little an extent by this book, the author will find himself amply justified in his undertaking such a task. The book is by no means an exhaustive biography. There is already in existence an excellent book written by Miss Collett and to

it the present writer is indebted not a little. The present work is, however, more of the nature of *Memorabilia* like its predecessor "Brahmarshi Keshub Chunder Sen" and he may well pray and hope that the spirit of both the *Rajarshi* and the *Brahmarshi* will speak to us through these books of things of which we always stand in need.

Oriental Christ House,  
Rajkot.  
20th February 1927.

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MANILAL C. PAREKH.

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# RAM MOHAN ROY



## CHAPTER I

### BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born in a Brahmin family of Bengal in or about the year 1872. It is unfortunate that the proper date of his birth is not available. This event took place in the town of Radhanagar in Burdwan District. His family evidently was one of culture and position, inasmuch as for a few generations past they had taken to civil service in the times of the Mohammedan rulers of Bengal, and some of his immediate fore-fathers had even risen to a high position under that rule. Ram Mohan Roy's father had left the service of the Moslem king owing to some cause or other, and leaving Murshidabad where he was serving had come down to his native place and it was there that Ram Mohun was born. While his ancestors on his father's side were thus men who had mixed much with the affairs of the world, those on his mother's side had confined themselves all the while to their priestly profession and they were justly proud of it. Moreover there was a difference in the faiths of these two families, the father's family following the Vaishnav faith while the mother's that of the Shaktas. All these diversities of vocation and belief did not fail to find a place in the composite character of him who was to be the first great reformer of Hinduism in modern times and the father of modern India.

To this rich mental inheritance from both father and mother was added a first class education that it was possible to have in those days. According to the traditions of his family, after Ram Mohun had undergone at home some preliminary training, he was sent to a regular school in Patna to learn Arabic and Persian, a knowledge of both of which was necessary for conducting business of the Mohammedan courts and which all those who wanted to join the service of the Nabobs were required to learn. Ram Mohun was endowed with great natural gifts, his acute intelligence being the chief of these. To this in all probability was added great industry from the first. Owing to these he made the best use of his time while at Patna where he remained for some years, and was thoroughly grounded in several subjects, such as Logic, Aristotelian Philosophy, Euclid etc., besides mastering the two great languages of the Mohammedan culture. He read much of the literature in them, but more than all that he came to know something of the Moslem faith and it is this that may be said to have given a new turn to his life. The strong common sense and strength of mind which he seems to have inherited from his mother especially, together with a very deep love of truth which was native to himself, could not but find the force of Mohammad's teaching, particularly his very strong belief in the unity of God which he shared in common with the Jewish Prophets. Thus it was here in this early reading of the Koran, or of other Mohammedan books that the seed of the future Reform-movement was sown, and it is probably due to the same source that we owe the iconoclastic fervour with which Ram Mohun carried on his religious work all his life.

The immediate result of this study on the mind of this precocious boy of only fifteen years was that he came in conflict with his father for giving a free vent to his own opinions on the question of idolatry and the unity of God in a book that he is said to have written. So great was this conflict that he had even to leave home for some years, during which a boy that he was he is said to have travelled as far as Tibet in the manner of many Sannyasis of those days. While there, he could not but have been horrified to see the people offering the highest worship to the Lamas, and as is said it was only due to the merciful women of that country that the young boy's life was spared. For this act of these women he remained grateful not only to them all his life, but to the whole of woman-kind. After wandering for a period of some two or three years he came home or perhaps was recalled back, but again finding it impossible to remain under the paternal roof any longer he separated himself from his family "in consequence of his altered habits of life and change of opinions which did not permit their living together," to use his own words.

It was probably immediately after this that he remained for some years at Benares, and while there studied most of the Hindu books and came to various conclusions with regard to them, conclusions which he later on preached to his countrymen.

With regard to much of this early period very few authentic details are available and even "An Autobiographical Sketch" from which the words quoted above are taken is regarded by some as spurious.

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## CHAPTER II

### HIS FIRST PUBLICATION.

Ram Mohan Roy began his public life by settling down at Murshidabad and publishing his first work called *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin*, meaning a Gift to Monotheists or Deists, a treatise in Persian with a preface in the Arabic language. Its aim was chiefly negative, it being a protest "Against the Idolatry of all Religions," by which title it was known for a long time. The book which may have lain with him perhaps for years as a manuscript, is a small one, and is the production of a youthful immature man who takes it upon himself to criticise the religions and traditions of the whole human race, merely because they fail to fit in with his few logical formulæ which he may have gathered in the course of a scanty training in a school of philosophy or two. The book clearly shows the predominant influence of his Mohammedan training and even of Mohammedanism, most of the quotations therein being taken from the Koran. However, the book is valuable chiefly as being the first expression of his mind and as such shows much of its working in his boyhood and youthfulness. Besides, it shows the great iconoclastic zeal which had taken possession of him at this early time and which more or less continued to be with him all his life. The only positive element in it is but a bare Deism, an extremely attenuated thing only a step removed from agnosticism.

The Introduction of the book stands thus :—

"I travelled in the remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as hilly lands, and found

the inhabitants thereof agreeing generally in believing in the personality of One Being Who is the source of all that exists and its governor, and disagreeing in giving peculiar attributes to that Being and in holding different creeds consisting of the doctrines of religion and precepts of *haram* (forbidden), and *halal* (lawful). From this Induction it has been known to me that turning generally towards one Eternal Being, is like a natural tendency in human beings and is common to all individuals generally. And the inclination of each sect of mankind to a particular god or gods, holding certain special attributes, and to some peculiar forms of worship or devotion, is an excrescent quality grown (in mankind) by habit and training. What a vast difference is there between nature and habit! Some of these sectarians are ready to confute the creeds of others owing to a disagreement with them, claiming the truth of the sayings of their predecessors: while these predecessors also like other men were liable to commit sins and mistakes. Hence it may not be improper if it be said that all of them are either right or wrong. In the former case two contradictions come together which is logically inadmissible. In the latter case, it may not be improper if it be said that either falsehood is to be attributed to some religions particularly or commonly to all: in the first case *tarjlibila murajjeh* i. e. giving preference without there being any reason for it (which is logically inadmissible) follows. Hence falsehood is common to all religions without distinctions. I have explained this in Persian, as it is more intelligible to the people of Ajam (i. e. Non-Arabians)."

It is with this Introduction that youthful Ram Mohan lays before his readers his "Induction" of the existence of God from the fact of its being universally held; and this forms the positive part of the book. His other logical conclusion viz., that because all religions are contradicting one another in all things, except a general belief in the existence of God, they are all false is its negative part and the main thesis of the book. Unfortunately for this Deism, which does not attain here even to the dignity of a philosophy but is on the same level as that of any inductive generalization in science or ordinary experience, it is far from true to say, in the face of such religions as Buddhism and Jainism, that all the peoples and races of the world have believed in "the personality of One Being Who is the source of all that exists and is its governor", nor is it perfectly true to say that they have disagreed "in giving peculiar attributes to that Being". Also it is not logical to say that because two traditions or scriptures or religions contradict each other they are both false. Ram Mohan himself came to see this fully in course of time and later on whatever truth he saw, however solitary or contradicted by other like claimants it be, he proclaimed it to the world as such.

It is in perfect keeping with this completely immature view of Religion that he finds the sources of all religion, tradition and authority in the desire of a priestly caste to preserve its own power and at best social order. He even charges the leaders and founders of various sects and religions with practising fraud upon their followers, in words such as these: "most of the leaders of different creeds, for perpetuating their flames and enhancing their reputation, have declared

some special beliefs in the form of pure truths resting on miracles or on the power of tongue and devices suited to the condition of the congregation, and have in a way so attracted the majority of the people towards them, that these helpless persons, bound in obedience and servitude, having wholly lost the eye and heart of perception, consider it sinful to distinguish between actual goodness and apparent sin in the execution of the orders of their leaders." All this may be true more or less of the ecclesiastical powers and priestly castes of all ages and countries, but it is hardly true of the great founders of the various religions. In this also Ram Mohun advanced in his views later on and grew into an enthusiastic admirer of such religious teachers as Shankaracharya, Mohammad and above all of Jesus Christ. That while writing this he was thinking more of the ordinary people and priestly castes than of the great teachers is probably evident from a passage like this:—"The influence of these leaders over their followers and the extent of their submission to them have reached such a degree that some people having a firm belief in the sayings of their leaders, think some stones and vegetables and animals to be the real objects of their worship: and in opposing those who may attempt to destroy these objects of their worship or to insult them, they think shedding the blood of others or sacrificing their own lives, an object of pride in this world, and a cause of salvation in the next."

Then he goes on to show that the need of religion being rooted in the "social instinct" of man, and as "the foundation of faiths is based on the truth of the existence of the soul and on the existence of the next"



world (although the real nature of both is hidden)," every religion has necessarily made provision for social laws governing civil life and have attached rewards and punishments to certain acts both in this world and the next, "for the sake of the welfare of the people (society)," though not without appending to these a great many extraneous things which on the other hand have done more harm than good. Out of this tangle of truth and untruth, "any person of sound mind" can thread his way "to the one Being who is the fountain of the harmonious organization of the universe, and will pay attention to the good of the society," thus "becoming free from the useless restraints of religion which sometimes become sources of prejudice one against another and causes of physical and mental troubles." With such a belief in a purely utilitarian origin and end of all religion as this is, religion which serves mainly the end of preserving and advancing the social and personal well-being of man, it is no wonder that he found very little in great religions to sympathize with and much to protest against. The only argument that he brings forward against all those systems of penances and punishments which most of the old religions are full of, besides their being non-conducive to social and personal well-being is that they contradict one another and therefore they are false. According to youthful Ram Mohun, people believe in these and "the centres of the circles of faiths" because they do not distinguish between nature which leads them to a belief in God as "the source of creation" and in the sequence of cause and effect, and habit which leads them to believe in all those "things that they are told by their elders and religious

teachers from their childhood and boyhood. They are misled further into believing these by a belief in miracles which are said to have taken place in the lives of the great founders, but in all such belief they forget that there must be some unknown hidden natural cause behind every such alleged miracle if it at all took place, for all these miracles are accepted on "tradition", which itself is very doubtful, being handed down from age to age and thus getting additions and accretions. Moreover these traditions of various religions are contradictory of one another, and therefore they are all false, unless we prefer to be thrown on either of the horns of the dilemma of "admitting two contradictories" or "giving one thing preference over another without any reasonable ground." Hence no tradition which is contrary to reason is to be accepted.

After discrediting thus the value of miracles and tradition, Ram Mohun proceeds to do the same with the authority or even the necessity of "prophets or leaders of religion." He says with regard to this as follows:—"Some people argue in this way that the Almighty Creator has opened the way of guidance to mortal beings through the medium of prophets or leaders of religions. This is evidently futile, because the same people believe that all things in creation, whether good or bad, proceed from the Great Creator without any intermediate agency, and that the apparent causes are the means and conditions of that (i.e., their coming into existence). Hence it is to be seen whether the sending of prophets and revelation to them from God are immediately from God or through intermediate agency. In the first case there is no necessity of an intermediate

agency for guidance to salvation, and there does not seem any necessity of the instrumentality of prophets or revelation. And in the second case, there should be a series of intermediate agencies. Hence the advent of prophets and revelation like other external things have no reference to God, but depend upon the invention of an inventor. Prophets and others should not be particularly connected (or mixed up) with the teaching of a faith. Besides what one nation calls a guide to a true faith, another calls a misleading to an erroneous way."

He goes on to argue in the same way against all those who plead for belief in the established faith on the ground of practical prudence etc., and then lays down his own positive belief in contrast with that of the believers in established religions in these words:—

"Those who prefer the so-called invented revelation of mankind to the natural inspiration from God, which consists in attending to social life with their own species and having an intuitive faculty of discriminating good from evil, instead of gaining the union of hearts with mutual love and affection of all their fellow creatures without difference in shape and colour or creeds and religions, which is a pure devotion acceptable to God, the Creator of nature, consider some special formulæ and bodily motions to be the cause of Salvation and receiving bounty from Almighty God."

After contrasting thus his own faith with that of most people, he classifies mankind into the following four kinds:—

Firstly—A class of deceivers who in order to attract the people to themselves wilfully invent

doctrines, creeds and faiths and put the people to troubles and cause disunion among them.

2ndly—A class of deceived people who, without inquiring into the fact, adhere to others.

3rdly—A class of people who are deceivers and also deceived: they are those who having themselves faith in the sayings of another induce others to adhere to them.

4thly—Those who by the help of Almighty God are neither deceivers nor deceived."

He closes the book with a promise of publishing another book entitled Discussion of Various Religions in which he was to give details bearing on the subject, a work which he could not write, or at any rate was never published.

As said above, this book, if it has any value, has it only as being the first expression of his mind and as showing the prevailing influence thereupon at this early period. The case of pure Rationalism is very clearly set forth here, and therein he has much in common with the school of Deists and Illuminists which had done the same kind of work only a short while back in Europe and more particularly in France, a work which preceded the French Revolution. This shows how the human mind is the same whether in the East or the West, for at this period Ram Mohun knew nothing of the French school or of the English language, his sole study hitherto being that of the Moslem and Hindu literatures and cultures. Moreover, this book affords a very interesting study of the working of the mind of a man who, in course of time, advanced from its barren negative position to the very positive one of the "Precepts of Jesus" and the Trust-Deed of the Brahma Samaj, and later on came to be known almost as the founder of the Science of Comparative Religion.

### CHAPTER III

#### IN THE SCHOOL OF PRACTICAL LIFE AND OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

Ram Mohun entered into the service of the British East India Company in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and thereby he not only entered the school of life where he came to know the world more intimately but came to have a proper acquaintance with Western Civilization also. His keen and appreciative mind soon understood the sterling worth of the English people upon whom he had looked so long with much distrust, and by means of the English language which he mastered in course of time he came to comprehend the greatness of the Western Civilization in many of its aspects as few Indians have done since, in spite of the manifold advantages of schools, colleges, universities, libraries, etc., that the people of the following generations have possessed. But he could do all this because he was a man of capacious and versatile mind. He soon interested himself in the politics of Europe, in which Napoleon Bonaparte was then the moving figure and came to conceive much admiration for his great genius. He studied very carefully the momentous questions of constitutional and democratic government that were then being decided, not in the Houses of Parliaments of different nations, but on the battlefields of Europe. He came not only to understand but even to appreciate some of the principles that governed the French Revolution and began to look upon Democracy as the last word in politics, and as almost a new dispensation. Though England had not taken very kindly to the new

gospel the watchwords of which were Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, it so far was, with the solitary exception of the United States of America, the only country the government of which was more or less democratic. It was on this that Ram Mohun built all his hopes for the good of his country from the English connection, and he tried to cement it to the best of his ability till the end of his life.

Thus by the time that Ram Mohun Roy was forty or so, he had made himself almost at home in three civilizations and cultures, viz., Hindu, Moslem and European, and thus had laid a foundation for his future work such as few men have been in a position to do. A Raja Ram Mohun Roy or a Keshub could only be the product of a country like India which, alone of all the lands and countries, has been the meeting-place of many civilizations and cultures, all of which it has tried to assimilate in however tentative a manner it may be. For the first time in the history of the world three great cultures and religions met in this land and India was face to face with a situation which had never arisen before. It was not that Ram Mohun had become fully conscious of this fact or the full import of the situation at once, but in him the spirit of India or the genius of its people, which has always showed itself assimilative of all that is good, asserted itself and began to take a new view of things. Thus Ram Mohun was a representative not only of his own contemporaries, but of the whole of Modern India, one of the very greatest thereof and as such looked far ahead in all directions and in some to an extent that has not been reached since.

After serving the Company's Government with conspicuous ability and efficiency for over a decade,

Ram Mohun retired with sufficient competence to live in future in tolerable ease and comfort in what we may well call *Vanaprasthashram*, to devote himself entirely to the cause of Religion which was dearest and nearest to his heart, and to the service of his country, the clamant claims of which were pressing home to his heart and mind from all directions. In order that he may be able to do this in the most effective manner, he took up his residence in Calcutta which, as the capital of the New India that was coming into existence, was beginning to be the centre and source of light and leading not only of Bengal but of the whole of India. His fame as one who contemplated religious reform of his country, as a man of great learning and culture, had already preceded him, and there were in that city already a few friends and sympathizers with whose help he might begin his work. Accordingly he came to Calcutta in the year 1914 and entered the new *Vanaprasthashram*, not of solitude but of service of the New India that was coming to be and in the making of which he played no insignificant part.

## CHAPTER IV

### HINDU PROTESTANTISM.

Now that he was matured and mellowed with age and experience, he set himself to his chief task, his life-work, *viz.*, the abolition of idolatry and the spread of Monotheism, no more in the same spirit as that of his first work, but as one who comes before his people as a revivalist and reformer of their ancient religion. As said before he had come from his early youth to possess a great passion for Monotheism, though it was more of a negative than positive kind and was more like Deism. During the course of a decade and more that had passed since his first publication, he had come to see the necessity as well as advisability of appealing to the people through their own national scriptures rather than on grounds of reason as at first, particularly when these scriptures upheld a sort of monotheism which, though not quite free from touches of pantheism, was for his immediate purpose sufficiently militant against idolatry. For this reason he translated and published the Vedant Sutra into Bengali in 1815, and into English in 1816, entitling it "The Vedant, or the Resolution of all the Veds, the most celebrated and revered work of Brahmanical Theology, establishing the unity of the Supreme Being, and that He alone is the subject of propitiation and worship."

In the preface thereof he says as follows:—

"The whole body of the Hindu Theology, Law and Literature, is contained in the Vedas, which are affirmed to be co-eval with the creation. These works are extremely luminous, and being written



in the most elevated and metaphorical style, are, as may be well supposed, in many passages seemingly confused and contradictory. Upwards of two thousand years ago, the great Vyasa, reflecting on the perpetual difficulty arising from these sources, composed with great discrimination a complete and compendious abstract of the whole, and also reconciled those texts which appeared to stand at variance."

It is very interesting as well as instructive to see the development that has taken place in his mind since the publication of his "A Gift to Monotheists," to see how he has come to believe in scripture and its authoritative interpretation. But the most marked feature of the development is that whereas the contradictions between various religions were formerly his greatest stumbling-blocks even to the acceptance of any religion whatsoever, now even the contradictions of the same religion or scripture he no more stumbles at; rather the harmonious reconciliation of these is his greatest delight. It is a point of further interest and even a lesson of some value to notice in passing how the next step, viz., to resolve all the religions with all their innumerable contradictions into a harmonious whole was taken in the very institution which Ram Mohun established at the end of his career viz., the Brahma Samaj and by his great successor Keshub Chunder Sen.

Another very important thing in which he makes a like advance upon his former position is in his increasing distrust of the reasoning faculty on which he had relied altogether formerly. No more he looks upon it as the sole organ of religious knowledge

as will be seen from the following passage in the same preface :—

“I hope it will not be presumed that I intend to establish the preference of my faith over that of other men. The result of controversy on such a subject, however multiplied, must be ever unsatisfactory, for the reasoning faculty, which leads men to certainty in things within its reach, produces no effect on questions beyond its comprehension. I do no more than assert, that if correct reasoning and the dictates of common sense induce the belief of a wise, uncreated Being, who is the Supporter and Ruler of the boundless universe, we should also consider him the most powerful and supreme existence, far surpassing our powers of comprehension or description.”

With regard to the end in view in publishing and spreading the true knowledge of God among his Hindoo countrymen especially, he says in the same as follows :—

“ My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error, and by making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God.”

In publishing an abridgement of the same into the English language he aimed at convincing some of the

Europeans who had already begun "to palliate and soften the features of Hindu idolatry" in just the same manner as has been done since by such a body as the Theosophical Society. These defenders of Hindu idolatry said that these objects of worship were considered by their votaries as emblematical representations of the Supreme Divinity. In reply to this Ram Mohan says that that explanation of idolatry is not true to facts as he knew them intimately. This is what he says in connection with the same:—

"The truth is, the Hindus of the present day have no such views of the subject, but firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, who possess, in their own departments, full and independent power, and to propitiate them, and not the true God, are temples erected and ceremonies performed. There can be no doubt, however, and it is my sole design to prove, that every rite has its derivation from the allegorical adoration of the true Deity ; but at the present day all this is forgotten, and among many it is even heresy to mention it."

Then he goes on with the text itself giving therefrom only very abridged quotations and interspersing them with his own short explanations. He ends the book with these words which may be taken as a sort of a confession of his own faith:—

"The Veda also positively asserts that "He who in life was devoted to the Supreme Being, shall (after death) be absorbed in Him, and again be neither liable to birth nor death, reduction nor augmentation."

"The Veda begins and concludes with the three peculiar and mysterious epithets of God viz. first

Aum: second, Tat: third, Sat. The first of these signifies, That Being which preserves, destroys and creates. The second implies, That only Being which is neither male nor female. The third announces The true Being. These collective terms signify, that *One unknown, true Being is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the Universe.*"

After giving thus the background of the Vedic faith as it was formulated by Vyasa in the Vedant Sutra, Ram Mohun proceeded with the task of publishing some of the Upanishads themselves, "the principal Chapters of the Veda" as he called them, "in conformity to the comments of the great Shankaracharya." The first that was thus published was Isopnishad, in the preface to which he enters at some length into the discussion of the merits and demerits of Idolatry, quoting from the Puranas, Tantras, etc. for the purpose of showing that idol-worship is meant only for the illiterate and incapable. Speaking again of the allegorical interpretation offered by some Europeans owing to their own inability to conceive of such a thing as pure idolatry, he says as follows:—

"Hindus of the present age, with a very few exceptions, have not the least idea that it is to the attributes of the Supreme Being, as figuratively represented by shapes corresponding to the nature of those attributes, they offer adoration and worship under the denomination of gods and goddesses. On the contrary, the slightest investigation will clearly satisfy every inquirer, that it makes a material part of their system to hold as articles of faith all those particular

circumstances, which are essential to belief in the independent existence of the objects of their idolatry as deities clothed with divine power.

“Locality of habitation and a mode of existence analogous to their own views of earthly things, are uniformly ascribed to each particular god. Thus the devotees of Siva, misconceiving the real spirit of the Scriptures, not only place an implicit credence in the separate existence of Siva, but even regard him as an omnipotent being, the greatest of all the divinities, who, as they say, inhabits the northern mountain of Kailash, and that he is accompanied by two wives and several children and surrounded with numerous attendants. In like manner, the followers of Vishnu, mistaking the allegorical representations of the Shastras for relation of real facts, believe him to be chief over all other gods, and that he resides with his wife and attendants on the summit of heaven. Similar opinions are also held by the worshippers of Kali, in respect to that goddess. And in fact, the same observations are equally applicable to every class of Hindu devotees in regard to their respective gods and goddesses. And so tenacious are those devotees in respect to the honour due to their chosen divinities, that where they meet in such holy places as Haridwar, Prayag, Shiv-Kanchi, or Vishnu-Kanchi in the Dekkan, the adjustment of the point of precedence not only occasions the warmest verbal altercations, but sometimes even blows and violence. Neither do they regard the images of those gods merely

in the light of instruments for elevating the mind to the conception of those supposed beings: they are simply in themselves made objects of worship. For whatever Hindu purchases an idol in the market, or constructs one with his own hand, or has one made under his own superintendence, it is his invariable practice to perform certain ceremonies called Pran-Pratistha, or the endowment of animation, by which he believes that its nature is changed from that of the mere materials of which it is formed, and that it acquires not only life but supernatural power. Shortly afterwards, if the idol be of the masculine gender, he marries it to a feminine one, with no less pomp and magnificence than he has while celebrating the nuptials of his own children. The mysterious process is now complete, and the god and goddess are now esteemed the arbiters of his destiny, and continually receive his most ardent adoration.

“At the same time the worshipper of images ascribes to them at once the opposite natures of human and superhuman beings. In addition to their supposed wants as living beings, he is seen feeding, or pretending to feed them every morning and evening: and as in the hot season he is careful to fan them, so in the cold he is equally regardful of their comfort, covering them day by day with warm clothing and placing them at night in a snug bed. But superstition does not find a limit here: the acts and speeches of the idols, and their assumption of various shapes and colours, are gravely related by the Brahmins, and with all the marks of veneration are firmly believed by their deluded followers.

Other practices they have with regard to these which decency forbids me to explain. In thus endeavouring to remove a mistake, into which I have reason to believe many European gentlemen have been led by a benevolent wish to find an excuse for the errors of my countrymen, it is a considerable gratification to me to find that the latter have begun to be so far sensible of the absurdity of their real beliefs and practices as to find it inconvenient to shelter them under such a cloak, however flimsy and borrowed. The adoption of such a subterfuge encourages me greatly to hope, that they will in time abandon what they are sensible cannot be defended: and that, forsaking the superstition of idolatry, they will embrace the rational worship of the God of Nature, as enjoined in the Vedas and confirmed by the dictates of common sense."

This very realistic and perfectly true description of the state of gross idolatry into which the Hindus of those days had sunk completely, and from which they are far from free even to-day after a century of anti-idolatrous propaganda of the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and Christian Missions, will show the true nature of idolatry far more correctly than most things said in its defence. After this he goes on to refute one or two more arguments in favour of idolatry such as from custom etc., and then concludes the preface with an appeal to his countrymen to make a proper study and examination of their own Scriptures and judge of the truth themselves rather than follow those who would not let them examine the Scriptures. Then follows a short introduction wherein he laments the social condition of the Hindus which, he says, is

the result of their idolatrous beliefs and practices. He says therein as follows :—

“Living constantly among Hindoos of different sects and professions, I have had ample opportunity of observing the superstitious puerilities into which they have been thrown by their self-interested guides, who, in defiance of the law as well as of common sense, have succeeded but too well in conducting them to the temple of idolatry: and while they hid from their view the true substance of morality, have infused into their simple hearts a weak attachment for its mere shadow.

“For the chief part of the theory and practice of Hindooism, I am sorry to say, is made to consist in the adoption of a peculiar mode of diet: the least aberration from which (even though the conduct of the offender may in other respects be pure and blameless) is not only visited with the severest censure, but actually punished by exclusion from the society of his family and friends. In a word he is doomed to undergo what is commonly called loss of caste.

“On the contrary, the rigid observance of this grand article of Hindoo faith is considered in so high a light as to compensate for every moral defect. Even the most atrocious crimes weigh little or nothing in the balance against the supposed guilt of its violation. Murder, theft or perjury, though brought home to the party by a judicial sentence, so far from inducing loss of caste, is visited in their society with no peculiar mark of infamy or disgrace.



"My reflection upon these solemn truths have been most painful for many years. I have never ceased to contemplate with the strongest feelings of regret, the obstinate adherence of my countrymen to their fatal system of idolatry, inducing, for the sake of propitiating their supposed Deities, the violation of every human and social feeling. And this in various instances; but more especially in the dreadful acts of self-destruction and the immolation of the nearest relations, under the delusion of conforming to sacred religious rites. I have never ceased, I repeat, to contemplate these practices with the strongest feelings of regret, and to view in them the moral debasement of a race who, I can not help thinking, are capable of better things: whose susceptibility, patience and mildness of character render them worthy of a better destiny. Under these impressions, therefore, I have been impelled to lay before them genuine translations of parts of their scripture, which inculcates not only the enlightened worship of one God, but the purest principles of morality, accompanied with such notes as I deemed requisite to oppose the arguments employed by the Brahmans in defence of their beloved system. Most earnestly do I pray that the whole may, sooner or later, prove efficient in producing on the minds of the Hindus in general, a conviction of the rationality of believing in and adoring the Supreme Being only: together with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle—*Do unto others as you would be done by.*"

These long quotations have justification only in this that, they show as nothing else can from their being

contemporaneous and from their being written by the most trustworthy Indian of that time, the moral, social and spiritual condition of Hindustan or of the Hindus just at that time when they were emerging from what may be called the mediæval period. People to-day are apt to forget what their own forefathers were only a hundred years ago, and how much they have travelled on the path of all-round progress since that time. "The self-destruction and the immolation of the nearest relatives" of which he speaks here is the grossly inhuman custom of Suttee of which Ram Mohun's own sister-in-law had been a victim only a few years ago, and of which hundreds were willing and unwilling victims every year in Bengal alone. One has only to remember what this custom was to be fully aware of the moral difference that has been made between the condition of the society then and now, a moral difference due largely to the conscious and unconscious working of that very "grand and comprehensive moral principle," the Christian precept *par excellence* "Do unto others as you would be done by," which Ram Mohan quotes for the first time in his own religious writings which he was laying before his countrymen for their serious perusal and consequent uplift, which fact shows that Ram Mohan was beginning to make his acquaintance with the Christian religion and scripture, if he had not already made it.

Ram Mohan later on published the Katha-Upnishad into Bengalee and English, the latter "to assist the European community in forming their opinion respecting Hindoo Theology, rather from the matter found in their doctrinal scriptures, than from the Puranas, moral tales, or any other modern works, or from the

superstitious rites and habits daily encouraged and fostered by their self-interested leaders." The idolatrous system he calls one "which destroys to the utmost degree the natural texture of society, and prescribes crimes of the most heinous nature, which even the most savage nations would blush to commit, unless compelled by the most urgent necessity."

All this work was not done without calling forth defences from the Hindu advocates of idolatry, among which there was one especially which Ram Mohan had to reply to, in a special tract calling it "Hindu Theism". This was from Madras and was written by one called Shankar Shastri, the Head Master of the Madras Government College. In his reply to the charge that he was setting himself up as a discoverer and reformer, Ram Mohan writes as follows:—

"In none of my writings, nor in any verbal discussion, have I ever pretended to reform or to discover the doctrines of the unity of God, nor have I ever assumed the title of reformer or discoverer: so far from such an assumption, I have urged in every work that I have hitherto published, that the doctrines of the unity of God are real Hinduism, as that religion was practised by our ancestors, and as it is well-known even at the present age to many learned Brahmins."

Another very valuable fact that is incidentally brought out in connection with his reply is that Ram Mohan Roy was the first man in India to translate the Vedas in the vernacular, at least in the north of India, the book being confined so long entirely to the Sanskrit language, and more or less to the Brahmins who alone were entitled to the knowledge of it. To

have been the first among Hindus to give a free access to the commonest people to their most ancient scriptures by translating them in their own vernaculars reflects not a little credit on him for pioneering boldness and wisdom, although he had before him the example of such men as Wycliff and Luther in Europe, and of William Carey in India in his own time who had begun his great and unparalleled work of translating the Bible into all the vernaculars of India, foreigner and single-handed as he was, not to mention the most important example that was always before him, *viz.* the fact of even the most ordinary Moslem man or woman being acquainted with the Koran which, though then not translated into any of the Indian vernaculars, was commonly read by all and sundry in the original. Any way it was a great departure and was worthy of the great man.

A very serious objection that was brought against his work which was the propagation of *Jnana-Kanda i. e.* the spiritual knowledge, was that according to the ancient system which was practised for thousands of years, this was necessarily preceded by *Karma-Kanda* and *Upasana i. e.* sacrifices, alms-giving, penance, fasting, worshipping gods and goddesses and various incarnations, etc. all which found no place in the system preached by Ram Mohan Roy. To this he gave the following reply which, in as much as it makes this *Jnana-Marga* meant only for exceptional people, could hardly have been satisfactory to himself. His words are these :—

“ I, in common with the Vedas and the Ved-  
anta, and Manu (the first and best of Hindu  
lawgivers) as well as with the most celebrated

Shankaracharya, deny these ceremonies being necessary to obtain the knowledge of the divine nature, as the Vedanta positively declares, in text 36, section 4th, chapter 3rd.

“ Man may acquire the true knowledge of God, even without observing the rules and rites prescribed by the Veda for each class, as it is found in the Veda that many persons, who neglected the performance of the rites and ceremonies, owing to their perpetual attention to the adoration of the Supreme Being, acquired the true knowledge respecting the Supreme Spirit. The Veda says “Many learned true believers never worshipped fire, or any celestial gods through fire.” And also the Vedant asserts in the 1st text of the 3rd section of the third chapter : “ The worship authorized by all the Vedas is one, as the directions for the worship of the only Supreme Being are invariably found in the Veda, and the epithets of the Supreme and Omnipresent Being etc. commonly imply God alone.” Manu, as I have elsewhere quoted, thus declares on the same point, chapter 12th text 92nd. “ Thus must the chief of the twice-born, though he neglect the ceremonial rites mentioned in the Shastras be diligent in attaining a knowledge of God, in controlling his organs of sense and in repeating the Veda.” Again chap. 4th text 23rd : “ Some constantly sacrifice their breath in their speech, when they instruct others of God aloud, and their speech in their breath, when they meditate in silence: perceiving in their speech and breath thus employed, the imperishable fruit of a sacrificial offering.” 24th :

“ Other Brahmins incessantly perform those sacrifices only, seeing with the eye of divine learning, that the scriptural knowledge is the root of every ceremonial observance. ” And also the same author declares in chapter 2nd text 84th: “ All rites ordained in the Vedas, oblations to fire and solemn sacrifices, pass away : but that which passes not away is declared to be the syllable Om, thence called Akshara since it is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings. ”

All these texts which Ram Mohan Roy so sedulously brings forward in order to prove the validity of *Jnana-Kanda* apart from the *Karma*-, and *Upasana-Kanda*, instead of strengthening his position, only bring out its weakness in as much as they show clearly that it is only in exceptional cases that such a course could be held valid and may prove beneficial. That he was not altogether unconscious of this great difficulty in the way of his teaching being acceptable to all seems clear from the following reply that he gives :—

“ The learned gentleman states that the difficulty of attaining a knowledge of the Invisible and Almighty Spirit is evident from the preceding verses. ” I agree with him in that point, that the attainment of perfect knowledge of the nature of Godhead is certainly difficult or rather impossible ; but to read the existence of the Almighty Being in his works of nature, is not, I will dare to say, so difficult to the mind of a man possessed of common sense, and unfettered by prejudice, as to conceive artificial images to be possessed, at once, of the opposite natures of human and divine beings, which idolaters constantly ascribe to

their idols, strangely believing that things so *constructed* can be converted by ceremonies into *Constructors* of the universe. ”

In these words if he finds any escape out of the difficulty it is only by substituting for what he calls Hindu Theism natural Deism, and then by the negative process of showing the utter absurdity of idolatry. As Ram Mohun himself admits a little further on, the great teachers of what he calls Hindu Theism, such as Vyas, Manu and Shankaracharya, the teachers whose authoritative interpretation of the Vedas he holds as binding on all the Hindus, do keep the path to idolatry open at least to a large part, if not to all, as was said by Shankar Shastri. In this connection he says:— “ I cannot admit that the worship of these attributes under various representations, by means of consecrated objects, has been prescribed by the Veda to the *Human Race* : as this kind of worship of consecrated objects is enjoined by the Shastra to those only who are incapable of raising their mind to the notion of an invisible Supreme Being. ” Ram Mohan was on surer ground when he replied to the objection from the impossibility of worshipping the invisible God, in the following words: “ Permit me in this instance to ask, whether every Musalman in Turkey and Arabia, from the highest to the lowest, every Protestant Christian at least of Europe, and many followers of Kabir and Nanak, do worship God without the assistance of consecrated objects ? ” It was the example of these, chiefly of the first, and then of such eclectic schools of thought as those of Nanak and Kabir, schools which were deeply influenced by Moham-  
medanism, nay, were as much the product of that faith

as of Hinduism, that was at the back of all these iconoclastic efforts of Ram Mohan Roy, and not the half-hesitating permission of the Hindu Shashtra given to those few who in self-conscious superiority might think themselves above others and thus worship God in a spiritual manner, whereas its direct and unambiguous prescription to the whole Human Race according to Shankar Shastri, or its injunction to the majority of men, if not to all, according to Ram Mohun himself, was the other way.

With regard to some of the immoral practices in connection with much of this idolatry, he again says as follows:-

“ But should the learned gentleman require some practical grounds for objecting to the idolatrous worship of the Hindus, I can be at no loss to give him numberless instances, where the ceremonies that have been instituted under the pretext of honouring the all-perfect Author of Nature, are of a tendency utterly subversive of every moral principle.

“ I begin with Krishna as the most adored of the incarnations, the number of whose devotees is exceedingly great. His worship is made to consist in the institution of his image or picture, accompanied by one or more females, and in the contemplation of his history and behaviour, such as his perpetration of murder upon a female of the name of Putna : his compelling a great number of married and unmarried women to stand before him denuded : his debauching them and several others to the mortal affliction of their husbands and relations : his annoying them, by violating the laws of



cleanliness and other facts of the same nature. The grossness of his worship does not find a limit here. His devotees very often personify ( in the same manner as European actors upon stages do ) him and his female companions, dancing with indecent gestures, and singing songs relative to his love and debaucheries. It is impossible to explain in language fit to meet the public eye, the mode in which Mahadev, or the destroying attribute, is worshipped by the generality of the Hindus: suffice it to say, that it is altogether congenial with the indecent nature of the image, under whose form he is most commonly adored. The stories respecting him which are read by his devotees in the Tantras, are of a nature that, if told of any man, would be offensive to the ears of the most abandoned of either sex. In the worship of Kali, human sacrifices, the use of wine, criminal intercourse and licentious songs are included: the first of these practices has become generally extinct: but it is believed that there are parts of the country where human victims are still offered, Debauchery, however, universally forms the principal part of the worship of her followers. Nigam and other Tantras may satisfy every reader of the horrible tenets of the worshippers of the two latter deities. The modes of worship of almost all the inferior deities are pretty much the same."

The moral passion with which this passage is full and which makes him write it and things like it in other places is remarkable and unique in the history of Modern India. He is filled with the passion for righteousness and moral purity and wants to see these

established in the heart of the Hindu society. There is no weak tolerance here with moral abuse, but the courage of conviction of the highest kind which makes him say what he feels in the face of all opposition. It is this which puts him in the front rank of the reformers of religious and social life all over the world.

Ram Mohan concluded this paper on Hindu Theism with one paragraph more in which we have for the first time the mention of "Christ the Saviour." This was made at first by Shanker Shastri who called him a "personification of the mercy and kindness of God (I mean actual not allegorical personification)." To this way of looking at Christ by an orthodox Hindu, Ram Mohan replies in the following negative way, saying:—

"From the little knowledge I had acquired of the tenets of Christians and those of anti-Christians I thought there were only three prevailing opinions respecting the nature of Christ, viz., that he was considered by some as the expounder of the laws of God and the mediator between God and man; by many to be one of the three mysterious persons of the Godhead whilst others such as the Jews say that he was a mere man. But to consider Christ as a personification of the mercy of God is, if I mistake not, a new doctrine in Christianity, the discussion of which, however, has no connection with the present subject."

The fact that in this first serious controversy relating to Hinduism itself that was held in Modern India, it was the orthodox interpreter of Hinduism who had the great courage, not only to introduce the name of Christ, but even to go to the length of interpreting

Christianity in a way, which, though mistaken, was certainly nearer the truth than what Ram Mohan ever came to even in his later efforts viz., Unitarian Christianity, is not without very great significance. But what is more surprising still is that, after giving such a bold and new interpretation of Christianity, the orthodox Hindu defender goes a step further and tries to so organically relate it to Hinduism as to make Christ and Christianity almost its crown and fulfillment. This shows in what relation *true* and *genuine* orthodox Hinduism has stood with Christianity from the first, and how every real Hindu has sought to give at least some of the best part of his heart, if not all, to the crucified Christ Jesus.

As for this Shanker Shastri, one finds from the very few extracts from his defence that are given by Ram Mohan in his reply that he was a veritable chip of the old block of South India, which produced some of the greatest religious geniuses of medieval India, such as Shankar, Ramanuja, Madhwa, etc. Besides, he, in his catholicity as well as genuine understanding of the true spirit of the whole of Hinduism, higher as well as popular, is not an unworthy forerunner of that school which is known by the name of Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Vivekananda, and of a part of Keshub's own development in his last phase. He, in his present defence of Hinduism, shows a far deeper understanding of the affinity that exists between the Pauranic and popular Hinduism, which had its origin in the desire to avoid the extreme abstractedness of the Vedas and Vedant and to make religion concrete, a thing of flesh and blood as well as of heart and spirit, and Christianity which fulfills this desire

without any of those absurdities of polytheism into which popular Hinduism had fallen. This we see from his speaking of Christ as *the saviour*, and saying about him that he should be considered an actual personification of the mercy and kindness of God and not an allegorical personification such as Hindu gods and goddesses were.

Ram Mohan Roy wrote a second defence, in the same year 1817, against another head Pundit of the Government College at Calcutta, almost in the same strain. In this he draws an interesting and instructive contrast between the Greek & Roman idolatry on the one hand, and the Hindu idolatry on the other, showing how the evil of idolatry in India was enhanced by the system of caste in a way like which nothing is known in other countries. His actual words are as follows :-

“ I, however, beg leave to remark on this instance, that though the idolatry practised by the Greeks and Romans was certainly just as impure, absurd and puerile as that of the present Hindoos. yet the former was by no means so destructive of the comforts of life, or injurious to the texture of society, as the latter. The present Hindu idolatry being made to consist in following certain modes and restraints of diet ( which according to the authorities of the Mahabharat and other histories were never observed by their forefathers ) has subjected its importunate votaries to entire separation from the world, and also from each other, and to constant inconveniences and distress.”

There are one or two more facts concerning the degraded condition of the society of those days which

are worth recording in as much as they show what advance has been made since. Speaking of the sale of girls, he writes :—" The sale of female children under pretence of marriage is practised by nearly two-thirds of the Brahmans of Bengal and Tirhoot, as well as by their followers generally." With regard to the frightful state of polygamy then prevalent, he writes ; " In defiance, however, of this restraint ( imposed by Yagnavalkya even in case of a second marriage which is allowed only under certain conditions ) some of them marry thirty or forty women, either for the sake of money got with them at marriage, or to gratify brutal inclinations."

After this Ram Mohan published the *Mundak* and the *Kena Upnishads*, and he makes in the last paragraph of the introduction to the latter a significant statement with regard to the value of tradition and the limitation of reason, which shows how far he has advanced from the position of his first production in his immature years. He says as follows :—

" I have often lamented that, in our general researches into theological truth, we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other : and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is, alone, to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best

method perhaps is, neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other: but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both, endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties, relying on the goodness of the Almighty Power, which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for. ”

Along with these efforts of his to spread Vedic Monotheism through these manifold publications, controversies, etc, he was making others for the removal of such gross abuses as the custom of suttee and also for the spread of education in co-operation with a man like David Hare, who too had a hand in the formation of the new generation.

As a result of all these activities a group of men of weight and social dignity such as Dwarkanath Tagore, the father of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and grandfather of Ravindra Nath Tagore, and others were gradually gathering round him not only for the purpose of carrying on the same propaganda but even for the cultivation of spiritual life in accordance with their monotheistic beliefs. As early as 1815, a society called Atmiya Sabha, a Friendly Association, had been started for the purpose of cultivating spiritual fellowship, the chief features of which were recitations of some portions of the Hindu scriptures and the singing of theistic hymns. He himself gives an account of all these activities and movements of his after about three years of his arrival in Calcutta to an old friend Mr. John Digby in England, under whom he had worked while in Company's service, as follows :—

“ I take this opportunity of giving you a summary account of my proceedings since the period of your departure from India.

The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any others which have come to my knowledge and have also found Hindus in general more superstitious and miserable, both in performance of their religious rites, and in their domestic concerns, than the rest of the known nations on the earth. I, therefore, with a view of making them happy and comfortable both here and hereafter, not only employed verbal arguments against the absurdities of the idolatry practised by them, but also translated their more revered theological work, namely Vedant, into Bengali and Hindustani, and also several chapters of the Veda, in order to convince them that the unity of God, and absurdity of idolatry, are evidently pointed out by their own Scriptures. I, however, in the beginning of my pursuits, met with the greatest opposition from their self-interested leaders, the Brahmins, and was deserted by my nearest relations. I consequently felt extremely melancholy; in that critical situation the only comfort that I had was the consoling and rational conversation of my European friends, especially those of Scotland and England.

“ I now with the greatest pleasure inform you that several of my countrymen have risen superior to their prejudices: many are inclined to seek for the truth and a great number of those who dissented from me have now coincided with me in

opinion. This engagement has prevented me from proceeding to Europe as soon as I could wish. But you may depend upon my setting off for England within a short period of time, and if you do not return to India before October next, you will most probably receive a letter from me, informing you of the exact time of my departure for England, and of the name of the vessel on which I shall embark."

This kind of life and work went on till about 1820 when Ram Mohan Roy entered on altogether a new phase of his career which was much more in accordance with his innermost beliefs. As for his visit to England of which he speaks in this letter it had to be postponed for a number of years to come



## CHAPTER V

### THE PUBLICATION OF THE "PRECEPTS OF JESUS."

The careful student of religious truth that Ram Mohan was, he may have learnt to have some kind of reverence for Jesus Christ, even from his early youth, when he studied the Koran which holds up Jesus as the greatest of prophets except, of course, Mohammad. But this general reverence was without any very definite knowledge of him *i.e.* his life, work and teaching, as these things are not in the Koran. As for his direct acquaintance with Christianity, it could not have begun earlier than his study of the English language and his intercourse with the English people, but from the start he must have looked with hesitation, if not suspicion, at the orthodox version of it as he was already acquainted with the one given in the Koran. Whether it was due to this or to any other reason, he wanted to study both the Old and the New Testament in their original languages, viz. the Hebrew & the Greek, and thus to know whether these books were genuine or full of interpolations as alleged by Mohammad and his followers.

Though he may not have found the study of the Hebrew language very difficult owing to his knowledge of both Persian and Arabic, a proper study of these scriptures in the original must have been certainly a hard task for him. Hence the study of these languages in those days, for the sole purpose of studying the Scriptures of the Christian Religion, shows the great quest after truth that was in him, and also, how

thorough-going and painstaking he was in his study of religion, and thus it stands out as a most remarkable fact in his life, a fact which is unique in the whole history of Modern India. Of the result of these studies or "researches" as he calls them, we learn for the first time from his letter to Mr. Digby quoted above, written in the year 1820.

Thus in the first quarter of the nineteenth century soon after his *vanprasthashram* began, Ram Mohan Roy was in the remarkable position which no other Hindu had ever attained before him, nor has any one else even after him in spite of his example, and which perhaps few in the whole world have attained before or since, viz. of having made a thorough, comprehensive and comparative study of three of the greatest religions of the world, viz. Hinduism, Mohammedanism and Christianity. Moreover these three include in them to a certain extent Buddhism, Jainism and Judaism, the first two going with Hinduism and the last with Christianity and Mohammedanism. It is this singular character and position of his as a seeker of truth that has justly entitled him to be the founder and originator of the Science of Comparative Religion. Of course, it is not meant to say here that there was no such thing as Comparative Religion in the world before this, for it is as old as the world itself and wherever man has met man, nation met nation, there have been some, and among them great men such as Plato, Philo, Clement, Origen, etc., in the west, and men like Nanak, Kabir, etc. in India in more recent times, who have risen above the strife and conflict common among the generality of mankind to a view of things and religions, which finds in them harmony,

order and unity instead of discord and disunion. Thus eclectic systems and synthetic religions have sprung up all over the world from times immemorial, and philosophers and mystics have vied with one another in seeing harmony and unity. But although there were such eclectic philosophies and even religions, it is doubtful if things had come to that state where there could be a science of these religions. Perhaps the time for such a thing had not come, and it was in the present age only, an age pre-eminently of science, that there could be one.

We have seen above that Ram Mohan Roy was convinced of the moral superiority of the Christian Precepts over all others, and hence he wanted to lay them before his countrymen, for whose moral and spiritual uplift he was working all these years. He had set out as a religious seeker and inquirer, and whatever new truths he found he laid them before his people. Accordingly after his study of the Christian Religion was ripe, he collected the precepts, parables, etc. of Jesus together and published them in the year 1820, with the title "The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness." This collection has a very small introduction and it is thus that it begins:—

"A conviction in the mind of its total ignorance of the nature and of the specific attributes of the Godhead, and a sense of doubt respecting the real essence of the soul, give rise to feelings of great dissatisfaction with our limited powers, as well as with all human acquirements which fail to inform us on these interesting points. On the other hand, a notion of the existence of a supreme superintending power, the Author and

Preserver of this harmonious system, who has organized and who regulates such an infinity of celestial & terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind. The former of these sources of satisfaction, viz., a belief in God, prevails generally, being derived either from tradition and instruction, or from an attentive survey of the wonderful skill and contrivance displayed in the works of nature. The latter, although it is partially taught also in every system of religion with which I am acquainted, is principally inculcated by Christianity. This essential characteristic of the Christian religion I was for a long time unable to distinguish as such, amidst the various doctrines I found insisted upon in the writings of the Christian authors, and in the conversation of those teachers of Christianity with whom I have had the honour of holding communication."

Further on at the end of the introduction he says as follows:—

"I feel persuaded that by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament, the moral principles found in that book, these will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding. For, historical, and some other passages are liable to the disputes and doubts of freethinkers and

anti-christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt, at best, to carry little weight with them. On the contrary, moral doctrines, tending evidently to the maintenance of the peace and harmony of mankind at large, are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion, and intelligible alike to the learned and to the unlearned. This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God, who has equally submitted all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature, and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in its present form."

It is in words such as these that the introduction sets forth the moral teaching or precepts of Jesus Christ as the most perfect exposition of that law which he elsewhere had called "that grand and comprehensive moral principle,—Do unto others as ye would be done by," the enunciation of which also was made by Christ. Though this forms in Ram Mohan Roy's eye the characteristic excellence of Christianity, it is not as a mere system of morality that he commends these precepts to his countrymen, but as a "code of religion and morality" which is from the point of view of

religion " so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God. "

The compilation thus introduced is made up of selections from the four Gospels only and contains mostly those precepts and parables of Jesus Christ which are chiefly moral and religious, and those episodes and events in His career wherein His function as a teacher especially is brought out. It is true Ram Mohan Roy does not exclude those passages which show Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah or even the Son of God, but this is not the main feature of the selection, and it is in this that there lies the chief difference between this book and the Gospels and in fact the whole of the New Testament, all the books of which are written for no other purpose than to show His Messianic character or His Sonship. It was, therefore, quite in keeping with this plan of his to show Jesus Christ as the pre-eminent moral teacher that Ram Mohan omitted not only that part of the Gospels which relates to his birth, but also the account of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, all which, to say the least, was like acting the play of Hamlet without the part of Hamlet, and hence was tantamount to taking away its life and soul. It was His Crucifixion that explained His life and teaching, and to omit it was to miss the entire meaning of both. Besides he excluded all the miracles that are related in the Gospels. The Gospels thus shorn of all those miracles of mercy which Jesus performed out of the infinite abundance of His love for the miserable, sick, sorrowing and sinning, and of the account of His death and resurrection, all of which in themselves form the the supreme miracle of mercy wrought by the

Almighty Father for the salvation of mankind, have no more their character as *Gospels*, which means good tidings, for now there is no good news of the mercy of God for sinful mankind left in them, but they are reduced only to an entirely unconnected record of His Precepts or Sayings which this compilation was, it being strictly true to its name.

We have no means of knowing what the immediate effects of the publication of these Precepts were on the mind of the people, especially the English-knowing section of it, for the translation of these into Sanskrit and Bengali as promised in the introduction for the benefit of the many, never came out. Perhaps there was nothing like a sensation among the orthodox people, who, if they at all came to know of this publication, might have naturally thought that heterodox as Ram Mohan Roy was, the next natural step for him was to be an apostate, and they might have further consoled themselves with thinking that after all he was being seen in his true colours. Ram Mohun Roy as an apostate, for the publication of such Precepts with its introduction could be nothing less in their eyes, was far more to be preferred to his being a heretic, for now that he had turned a Ferrungee not only nominally or outwardly but in reality, adopting even the religion of the Ferrungee, there was less danger of his disturbing the Hindu orthodoxy.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONTROVERSY WITH CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.

Whatever the effects on the Hindu side were, a thing about which we know very little, it was from another and least expected direction that a serious objection was taken to this publication, and that was from the Christian missionaries. The most important Christian missionaries in the country then were Drs Carey and Marshman, who had started their work of preaching the Gospel as early as 1799. Of these the former, who was little more than a cobbler in England before he started his work in India as a missionary, was a most remarkable man and one of the greatest missionaries of the Christian Church. Extremely poor and illiterate as he was at first, he, with great faith in God and in the Gospel of Christ, not only conceived the grand idea of converting the whole of this country to Christianity but launched on this vast enterprise, one of the greatest ever undertaken, without much help from man. Not only was he not helped by the Government of India, but he even met with opposition from it which went to the length of forbidding him to work in British India. Nothing daunted by this, he established himself in Serampore, a Danish settlement, and with the help of only one or two Englishmen, began his mission-work in India. It was not that he merely conceived great plans for the salvation of India, plans some of which have not even yet been carried out by his successors, but he executed a part of them himself. Indeed he was one of the greatest pioneers of the world. Though the romantic record of his and his companions' lives and labours be



out of place here, it may not be amiss, in order to show what kind of contemporaries Ram Mohan had, to quote a few words from the addresses given at the Centenary of the Serampore College recently celebrated, a college started by Carey and his co-workers as early as 1818, with the avowed object of giving instruction to "Asiatic Christians and other youth in Eastern literature and European science," through the medium of the vernacular, this one thing in itself showing how highly they thought of Asiatic literatures and potentialities of the Indian vernaculars. In the Centenary report we read the following :—

"Their work had a pioneer character in an astonishing variety of directions in the interpretation of Christian obligation, in the advancement of education, primary, secondary and collegiate, in the translation of the Bible into a great variety of languages, in the development of printing and the casting of types, in the production of philological and literary work in Sanskrit, Bengali and many other Indian languages, in the foundation of periodical literature, in the cultivation of science and the encouragement of agriculture, in the abolition of social evils and the promotion of social and religious reform. Considering the time in which they lived, and their lack of early advantages, nothing is more remarkable than the breadth and far-sightedness of their interpretation of the missionary aim and motive. To them the missionary was a representative and embodiment of the philanthropy of God in all the relationships of life." In the speech made on the occasion by the Governor of Bengal it was said among other things :—

"They produced first editions of the New Testament in more than thirty oriental languages and dialects. They printed the first books in the language of Bengal, and were the first to cultivate the language and make it the vehicle of national instruction. They published also the first vernacular newspaper in India."

It was not to be expected that such people who, staking every thing that they held dear, were preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its naked simplicity on such an unparalleled scale, involving necessarily an immense amount of personal sacrifice, labour and expense, should be altogether silent at what they considered to be an unwarrantable mutilation of the Gospel on the part of Ram Mohan Roy. Hence they criticised it very severely in their paper, thinking that it would "greatly injure the cause of truth." But this was not all. They failed, out of sheer bigotry, to understand the very laudable object of Ram Mohan Roy in publishing the Precepts, which was no other than the advancement of Truth, and hence, instead of treating him as an ally according to such words of Christ Himself as "all those who are not against us are with us," they looked upon him as an enemy and hence treated him as such. They even went to the length of calling him "heathen" a word which happily is going out of use in these days. For Ram Mohan Roy, this was the beginning of another controversy, reply and counter-reply and in course of it he wrote three "Appeals to the Christian Public," in which he examined the Christian Religion from all points of view, bringing to bear upon the Christian Scriptures all his knowledge of the Hebrew language and his acute intellect.

Ram Mohan Roy began his first appeal with repudiating the term ' heathen ' that was applied to him on the ground that he was " a believer in one true and living God," and " in the truths revealed in the Christian system " as well. In this connection he also defends his publication only of the Precepts and not of dogmas etc, on the sole ground of economy and reserve in order that people may learn to respect so much, and then love to learn more. After giving an account of his own renunciation of idolatry and polytheism, and belief in and public confession of one God, which fact alone should prevent any one from calling him a heathen, he pleads that since he has at least " one object in common with the Reviewer and Editor, that of procuring respect for the Precepts of Christ " they should have specially refrained from calling him so, particularly as Christ has said " He that is not against us is with us." Then he further states that the word ' moral ' which he had used with regard to these Precepts as their chief and characteristic excellence was " quite general " and applied " equally to our conduct in religious as in civil matters. " But he says further " It is, however, too true to be denied that the Compiler of those moral precepts separated them from some of the dogmas and other matters, chiefly under the supposition, that they alone were a sufficient guide to secure peace and happiness to mankind at large, a position that is entirely founded on and supported by the express authority of Jesus of Nazareth, a denial of which would imply a total disavowal of Christianity."

Then further on he says as follows:—

" The Compiler, finding these commandments as including all the revealed Law, and the whole

system of religion adopted by the Prophets and re-established and fulfilled by Jesus himself, as the means to acquire Peace and Happiness, was desirous of giving more full publicity in this country to them, and to the subsidiary moral doctrines that are introduced by the Saviour in detail. Placing almost implicit confidence in the truth of his sacred commandment, to the observance of which we are directed by the same teacher, "If ye love me keep my commandments," "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings," the Compiler never hesitated in declaring a belief in God and a due regard to that law "Do unto others as you would be done by," render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to mankind."

Referring to the question of atonement or forgiveness of sins which had found no place in his Precepts so far, he says :—

"These precepts separated from the mysterious dogmas and historical records appear, on the contrary, to the Compiler to contain not only the essence of all that is necessary to instruct mankind in their civil duties, but also the best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments. I, therefore, extract from the same compilation a few passages of that greatest of all Prophets who was sent to call sinners to repentance."

Ram Mohan Roy in these passages and others does not hesitate to call Jesus "the Saviour," "the greatest of all Prophets," "our gracious Saviour," and to call his message "the divine message of Jesus

of Nazareth. " But although he calls him the Saviour and says that it was for the purpose of recommending these Precepts better to his countrymen that he had separated them from other dogmatic and historical parts of the New Testament, there is no doubt that it is the Precepts or the sayings of Jesus that form for him the essence of Christianity, and that he shared the same scepticism with regard to the dogmatic part, though not the historical, that he ascribes in this Appeal to Indians, both Hindu and Mohammedan, due to which he says the work of the missionaries did not make proper progress. The work of evangelization *i.e.* the spread of Christianity, has been always a very difficult task, and all these twenty centuries a variety of ways and means of doing it have been proposed and followed, and the missionaries in India after the work of more than a century have not yet come to much definiteness about the way of doing it. The Roman Church, the Orthodox Protestants and the Liberal Protestants have all followed methods of evangelization of their own. In this connection it may be worth while to quote what Ram Mohan Roy says about the proper method of doing such work. After saying that there have been divisions among Christians themselves about these dogmas, he attributes the failure of the enthusiastic efforts of the missionaries of his time to the same cause in the following words:—

" But he has seen with regret that they have completely counteracted their own benevolent efforts, by introducing all the dogmas and mysteries taught in Christian Churches to people by no means prepared to receive them and that they have been so incautious and inconsiderate in their attempts to enlighten the natives of India, as to

address the instructions to them in the same way as if they were reasoning with persons brought up in a Christian country, with those dogmatical notions imbibed from their infancy. It has been owing to their beginning with the introduction of mysterious dogmas and of relations that at first sight appear incredible, that notwithstanding every exertion on the part of our divines, I am not aware that we can find a single respectable Musalman or Hindu, who was not in the common comforts of life, once glorified with the truth of Christianity, constantly adhering to it."

Though Ram Mohan Roy thus raises a serious problem as to the proper method of evangelization, the solution that he offers is not entirely acceptable in as much as he makes Christianity consist of only the Precepts as to how man should behave towards God and his brother man. whereas it is principally a revelation of God's own nature and character to man and consequent communication to him of the same nature. The doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, which were such stumbling-blocks to him owing to his Mohammedan training and bias, have real meaning only when Christianity is understood to be something more than a system of law such as it was thought by him to be. Besides he was speaking without sufficient warrant when he said that the Hindus would not accept these dogmas, for as a matter of fact the Hindus have always believed in incarnations of God and even in a sort of Trinity. It was also due to this Mohammedan bias that he extracted comparatively very few passages from the Gospel of St. John, which has been the greatest favourite with the Hindus in general. The fact is that there was the veil of Mohammedan rationalism between

his Hindu heart and Christianity with its cardinal doctrines of Incarnation and Trinity, but for which he would have seen the wonderful affinity between this Gospel and Hinduism at its best. It is due to this fact alone that all genuine Hindus are appreciating it more and more. With regard to the fact of his not having taken a sufficient number of passages from it, he says:—

“It is from this source that the most difficult to be comprehended of the dogmas of the Christian Religion have been principally drawn: and on the foundation of the passages of that writer, the interpretation of which is still a matter of keen discussion among the most learned and most pious scholars in Christendom, is erected the mysterious doctrine of three Gods in one Godhead, the origin of Mohammedanism, and the stumbling-block to the conversion of the more enlightened among the Hindus.”

With regard to the reason of his publishing only the Precepts, he again says:—

“Whether or not he erred in his judgment on that point must be determined by those who will candidly peruse and consider the arguments already advanced on the subject, always bearing in mind the lesson practically taught by the Saviour himself, of adapting his instructions to the susceptibilities and capacity of his hearers. John. Chapter VI, Verse 12. “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now.”

“Hindustan is a country, of which nearly three-fifths of the inhabitants are Hindus, and two-fifths Musalmans. Although the professors of neither of these religions are possessed of such

accomplishments as are enjoyed by Europeans in general, yet the latter portion are well known to be firmly devoted to a belief in one God, which has been instilled into their minds from their infancy. The former ( I mean, the Hindus) are, with a few exceptions, immersed in gross idolatry, and in belief of the most extravagant description respecting futurity, antiquity, and the miracles of their deities and saints, as handed down to them and recorded in their ancient books. Weighing these circumstances, and anxious, from his long experience of religious controversy with natives, to avoid further disputation with them, the Compiler selected those Precepts of Jesus, the obedience to which he believed most peculiarly required of a Christian, and such as could by no means tend, in doctrine, to excite the religious horror of Mohammedans, or the scoffs of Hindus.....But as a great number of missionary gentlemen may perhaps view the matter in a different light and join the Editor of the Friend of India, in accusing the Compiler as an injurer of truth, I doubt not that with a view to avoid every possibility of such imputation, and to prevent others from attributing their ill success to his interference with their duties, he would gladly abstain from publishing again on the same subject, if he could see in past experience anything to justify hopes of their success. From what I have already stated I hope no one will infer that I feel ill-disposed towards the missionary establishments in the country. This is far from being the case. I pray for their augmentation, and that their members may remain in the happy enjoyment of life in a climate so



generally inimical to European constitutions: for in proportion to the increase in their number, sobriety, moderation, temperance and good behaviour have been diffused among their neighbours as the necessary consequences of their company, conversation and good example."

The publication of the Precepts may not be objected to the same extent when it is meant to be an experiment in evangelization or as a first step to further evangelization as when it purports to be the essence of the Christian Religion as Ram Mohan Roy had given the impression of its being. There is not the least doubt that the Precepts of Jesus commend themselves easily and spontaneously to the mind of unsophisticated humanity as no other system of morality does. One of the outstanding instances of this is that of Mahatma Gandhi in recent times who, as acknowledged by himself, has received much inspiration from the Sermon on the Mount. What Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen and Gandhi have felt with regard to those Precepts, innumerable men and women have felt more or less in India just as they have done all over the world ever since the days of Christ Jesus. But the main question is whether this is the whole of Christianity. From the very first, whether it was due to these unsurpassable or unequalled ' words ' of his, or to his ' works ', those miracles of mercy which he performed as a part of his daily life, or to the manner of his speaking his ' words ' and doing his ' works ', that ' authority ' with which he spoke, and that ' grace and truth ' with which his Person was full, or whether it was due to all these combined, each contributing its share to the general result, there is not the least doubt that the question as to his Person has

been from the very first inextricably involved in that of his Precepts. The one could not be separated from the other. The question continually forced itself upon the mind of both his friends and enemies as to who he was, as we learn from not one but all the four Gospels. It was on this question that his disciples staked their all and followed him, and that Jesus himself staked his all, even his life as well as the future of his work. He sealed the Precepts with his blood and through the love that he thus showed invested them with not only that authority but even divine power, without which they would have been but a dead letter or what is worse an infinitude of burden which no human being could bear for a moment. That Ram Mohan Roy was not entirely unconscious of this inseparable connection between the Precepts and the Person of Jesus Christ is evident from the following passage which he gives in reply to the charge that he had not been altogether free from introducing some dogmas. It stands thus:—

“He there states, that it is on account of these passages being such as were the ordinary foundation of the arguments of the opponents of Christianity, or the sources of interminable controversies that have led to heart-burnings and even bloodshed among Christians, that they were not included in his selection: and they were omitted the more readily, as he considered them not essential to religion. But such dogmas, or doctrinal or other passages as are not exposed to those objections, and are not unfamiliar to the minds of those for whose benefit the compilation was intended, are generally included in conformity with the avowed plan of the work, particularly such as seem calculated to direct our love and obedience

to the beneficent Author of the universe, and to him whom he graciously sent to deliver these Precepts of Religion and morality, whose tendency is to promote universal peace and harmony."

This Appeal was replied to probably at length by the missionaries and to that he gave a further reply in a much more full and methodical manner, calling it "Second Appeal to the Christian Public."

He begins with saying that the observations of the Editor of the "Friend of India," the missionary paper, "are expressed in so mild and Christianlike a style that (they).....have also encouraged me to pursue my researches after the fundamental principles of Christianity in a manner agreeable to my feelings and with such respect as I should always wish to manifest for the situation and character of so worthy a person as the Editor."

Concerning "the truth and excellency of the dogmas found in the scriptural writings" which the Editor had laboured to establish, he says that he never "has expressed the least doubt as to the truth of any part of the Gospels, and so the arguments adduced by the learned Editor to demonstrate the truth and excellence of the authority on which they rest, are, I am inclined to think, quite superfluous and foreign to the matter in question."

He says further on that "the only reason assigned by the compiler for separating the Precepts from the abstruse doctrines and miraculous relations of the Gospels, is, that the former "are liable to the doubts and disputes of Free-thinkers and Anti-Christians, and the latter are capable at best of carrying little weight with the natives of this part of the globe, the fabricated

tales handed down to them being of a more wonderful nature." These sentiments respecting the doctrines and miracles, founded as they are upon undeniable facts, do not, I presume, convey any disavowal or doubt of their truth. Besides, in applying the term "fabricated" to the tales received by the credulous Hindus, the Compiler clearly evinced the contemptible light in which he viewed these legends and in stating that the miracles of the Scriptures were subject to the doubts of "Free-thinkers and Anti-Christians" it can never be fairly supposed that he meant himself, or any other person labouring in the promulgation of Christianity, to be included in that class."

Much of the controversy in this Second Appeal concerned the question of the Divinity of Jesus and the Atonement. With regard to the former of these Ram Mohan saw the vital necessity of explaining the meaning of many parts of St. John's Gospel, though he does this in the Unitarian or Socinian sense, sometimes giving forced interpretations and at other times violating altogether the sense of the text. The unity between God and Jesus Christ that forms so great a part of this Gospel and which is given expression to in the words "I and my Father are one" he explains as one not of nature and essence but "as a subsisting concord of will and design" and as one of "perfect concord, harmony, love, obedience such as the Son evinced towards the Father, and taught the disciples to display towards the Divine Will."

In connection with the same question of unity, he makes some very significant confessions such as these:—

"For my conviction, and for the satisfaction of those who consider the Precepts of Jesus as a

guide to Peace and Happiness, his word "They may be one, as we are," John XVII, verse 11, in defining the nature of unity between God and Jesus fully suffices. Disgusted with the puerile and unsociable system of Hindu idolatry, and dissatisfied at the cruelty allowed by Mussalmanism against Non-Mussalmans, I, on my searching after the truth of Christianity, felt for a length of time very much perplexed with the difference of sentiments found among the followers of Christ (I mean Trinitarians and Unitarians, the grand division of them), until I met with the explanation of the unity given by the divine Teacher himself as a guide to peace and happiness."

Though he thus believed in the unity between Christ and God as one of will and design, and tried to explain that unity by the one that was to prevail among the disciples of Christ, *i.e.*, the verse "I and my Father are one" by the verse "They may be one, as we are," he believed in the Pre-existence of Christ and his superiority over the whole of creation in the same way as the Arians who formed one of the greatest sections of the early Christian heretics. This is evident from the following:—

"The Scriptures indeed in several places declare, that the Son was superior even to the angels in heaven, living from the beginning of the world to eternity, and that the father created all things by him and for him. At the same time I must, in conformity to those very authorities, believe him as produced by the supreme Deity among created beings. John. Ch. V, verse 26. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he

given power to the Son to have life in himself." Colossians Ch. I, verse 15. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the *first born of every creature.*"

In the first part of this Appeal, Ram Mohan Roy dealt with the question of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, whereas in the second he dealt with the question of Atonement. While in the first he had to do mainly with St. John's Gospel, in the latter he had to deal with St. Paul's Epistles, which form what is called the fifth Gospel, both of which he had especially avoided in his first publication i. e. the Precepts of Jesus. It would have been one thing if he had clearly disavowed his belief in the New Testament as the revealed scripture, but it was certainly another and a far more difficult matter when after avowing his belief in it as the scripture he had to explain or explain away the writings of those two apostles which are full of these two doctrines. Therefore it is often by the veriest quibble or confounding the most insignificant type with the full-grown verity, e.g., in the following quotation, that he escapes from the belief held out by the Scripture. In trying to reply to the argument that it was because Jesus saved us by his death from our sins that he was called the Saviour as no one else was called before or after him, he says as follows :—

"We find the title "Saviour" applied frequently in the divine writings to those persons who had been endued with the power of saving people, either by inculcating doctrines, or affording protection to them, though none of them atoned for the sins of mankind by their death. Obadiah, verse 21. "And *saviours* shall come up on Mount

Zion to judge the mount of Esau and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Nehemiah IX. 27. "And according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them *saviours*, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies." 2 Kings XIII. 5. "The Lord gave Israel a *saviour*, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians."

This is indeed confounding a drop with an ocean, a most insignificant type or figure with its perfect antitype or reality, for none of the prophets, however great, not even Moses or Isaiah or any other, was ever called the *saviour*, a title which has been pre-eminent-ly that of Him Crucified. In fact much of the reasoning in all these parts is of the kind which explains the higher by the lower and not *vice versa* as it ought to be. But short of this vicarious atonement and the divinity of Jesus Christ, Ram Mohan Roy believed in him as not only the greatest of Prophets who came to reveal the will of God and make the Law of Moses perfect but as the expected Messiah, not hesitating to call him repeatedly the Saviour, the Son of God as well as Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor as is evident from the following passage :—

"The Revered Editor might have spared the arguments he has adduced to prove that Jesus was sent into this world as the long-expected Messiah, intended to suffer death and difficulties like other prophets who went before him as the Editor may find in the compilation in question, as well as in its defence, Jesus of Nazareth represented as "The Son of God", a term synonymous with that of Messiah, the highest of all the Prophets: and his life declares him to have been, as represented in

the Scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for temporal one, and great as the angels of God, or rather greater than they. He also might have omitted to quote authority as shows, that Christ, being a mediator between God and men "declared that whatsoever they ( his Apostles ) shall ask in his name, the Father will give them:" for, the compiler in his defence of the Precepts of Jesus, repeatedly acknowledged Christ as the Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor with God, in behalf of his followers. But such intercession does not, I presume, tend to prove the deity or the atonement of Jesus, as interpreted by the Editor, for God is represented in the sacred books to have often shown mercy to mankind for righteous man's sake. How much more, then, would he naturally manifest his favour towards those who might petition him in the name of one whom he anointed and exalted over all creatures and prophets ?"

This is nothing less than a full confession of his faith which amounts to Unitarian Christianity, which Ram Mohan Roy henceforward began openly to profess. The Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the Atonement of man's sin through His sacrifice on the cross were rejected by him along with the Socinians and Unitarians and also Mohammedans who stumble just in these two things. After thus professing his faith in Unitarianism, he proceeds to show how it was under the influence of the polytheistic people like the Greeks and the Romans chiefly that Trinitarianism prevailed, and expresses a hope that now that light and liberty have dawned upon Europe,



of Polytheism, whether gross or refined. I therefore enjoy the approbation of my conscience in publishing the Precepts of this Religion as the source of Peace and Happiness."

In this work he tries to vindicate not only his own publication of the Precepts of Jesus as the sole Guide to Peace and Happiness, but Christianity itself as he understood it against those whom he thought to be its false interpreters. From this time forth Ram Mohan Roy stood before both the orthodox Christians and his countrymen as an advocate of Unitarian Christianity.

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## CHAPTER VII

### UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

While carrying on this controversy with these missionaries, Ram Mohan Roy was engaged in translating the Gospels into the Bengali language as he found the one made by Carey abounding " in the most flagrant violation of native idiom, " in close co-operation with Messrs. Adam and Yates who belonged to the same mission as that of Carey. They already published the Sermon on the Mount separately, and they had finished the Gospel of Matthew when Rev. Yates refused to help them any more. It was while translating the very first few verses of the fourth Gospel that a serious difference arose between Adam and Yates, while during the discussion Ram Mohan as mentioned by Mr. Adam, " sat, pen in hand, in dignified reticence, looking on listening, observing all, but saying nothing." After Mr. Yates withdrew Ram Mohan Roy and Adam continued, and this work of theirs as well as the controversy between Ram Mohan Roy and the missionaries seems to have changed Mr. Adam's mind from Trinitarianism to Unitarianism, which fact was made public in the year 1821. As to how this change took place in Adam's mind, we learn from his own letter to a friend, wherein he writes as follows :—

" It is now several months since I began to entertain some doubts respecting the supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, suggested by frequent discussions with Ram Mohan Roy, whom I was endeavouring to bring over to the belief of that doctrine, and in which I was joined by Mr. Yates, who also professed to experience difficulties on

the subject. Since then I have been diligently engaged in studying afresh the Scriptures with a view to this subject, humbly seeking divine guidance and illumination, and I do not hesitate to confess that I am unable to remove the weighty objections which present themselves against this doctrine. I do not mean to say that there are no difficulties in rejecting it, but the objections against it compared with the arguments for it, appear to me like a mountain compared with a molehill."

Naturally so singular an event as this turning of Mr. Adam from a Trinitarian to an Unitarian produced a very great sensation, and this change from orthodoxy to heresy of one of their own missionaries as a result of the controversy with Ram Mohan Roy whom they had once called "heathen", the Baptist missionaries viz., Carey and Marshman may well attribute to the devil who was counteracting their efforts in the spread of the Kingdom of God in India and had already succeeded to a certain extent in thwarting them; and coupled as this change was with the name Adam, they did not hesitate to call him even "the second fallen Adam." If the missionaries may have thus seen the presence and influence of the devil in Mr. Adam's contact with Ram Mohan Roy and his consequent change of belief, Ram Mohan Roy too saw the presence of the same, of course in a rationalistic way, in another incident that happened at about this time. This was his interview with Bishop Middleton, the first Anglican Bishop of India. This Bishop had called him and then had entered into a long argument to persuade him to accept Christianity, and not content with this singular stretch of the hand of hospitality, had wound up by expatiating on "the

grand career which would open to him by a change of faith." "He would be honoured in life and lamented in death,—honoured in England as well as in India. His name would descend to posterity as that of the modern Apostle of India." He said to Ram Mohan Roy things like this as we learn from the English biography of the latter. The exact date of this conversation is not known but it was some time between 1820 and 1824 in which year the Bishop died. As the English biographer puts it, "the Bishop's meaning was doubtless innocent enough," but Ram Mohan Roy was very highly incensed at this way of putting the claims of Christianity before him. It is quite possible that the Bishop being an orthodox Christian could not understand any man in India, where such rationalism as was then coming into existence in Europe was unknown, going as far as Ram Mohan Roy did by way of publishing his Precepts of Jesus and making an open confession of Unitarian Christianity without going the full length of orthodox Christianity, and so perhaps thinking that it was some unworthy motive which was keeping him back, he might have suggested that Ram Mohan Roy as a Christian had a mission and destiny which even the highest of the high among Europeans may not have even dared to aspire after. To be an apostle of India was not a thing bad in itself, and Ram Mohan's own successor Keshub Chunder Sen, in giving to himself the highest place and title he could think of could do no more than call himself and his fellow-workers 'Hindu apostles of Christ.' But if the thing in itself was not wrong, it was perhaps the way of looking at it and putting it that constituted the offence. It is only

an apostolic man that can suggest an apostolical career to others. Unfortunately this first Bishop of the English Church in India was an entirely officialized person, who was more busy with his own place of honour next to the Governor-General than with the spread of Christianity in India and such a suggestion coming as it did from him must have about it a great deal of official air which could not but be offensive to Ram Mohan Roy. Whatever it be, he found in it an additional reason against Orthodox Christianity, a prejudice which was removed only when he saw it at its best in England.

So far as the personal faith of Ram Mohan Roy was concerned at this time, he had openly acknowledged himself as a Unitarian Christian, which was certainly a much more advanced position than the one taken in the Precepts. Now that Mr. Adam had joined him, they both set themselves to work in earnest for the spread of Unitarianism in India. In the year 1821, they formed a regular Committee of European and Indian gentlemen, the latter of whom were, besides Ram Mohan Roy, Dwarkanath Thakur, Prasanna Kumar Thakur and Radha Prasad Roy, all these being men of light and leading not only in Calcutta but in the whole of Bengal. The Committee was called the Calcutta Unitarian Committee. The objects and methods of this Unitarian organization are described thus by Miss Collett in her biography of Ram Mohun :—

“ Proselytism ”, Mr. Adam explains, “ is not our immediate object. We aim to remove ignorance and superstition, and to furnish information respecting the evidences, the duties and the doctrines of the religion of Christ.” The methods

chosen were "education, rational discussion, and the publication of books both in English and in the native languages." In January, 1822, Mr. Adam writes that he with the assistance of a few friends rented a house in which Christian worship is regularly conducted. "Ram Mohan Roy is one of the warmest of our supporters." As we shall see presently, the Anglo-Hindu school, commenced under the auspices of this Committee, was almost exclusively supported by Ram Mohan. The "Unitarian Press" was entirely his property. Mr. Adam, in his new role of Unitarian minister, seems to have depended for his financial support chiefly on Ram Mohan's bounty. So that the whole organization was principally in Ram Mohan's hands. We may regard the formation of this Unitarian Committee as a distinct and important stage in his career as founder."

Thus this Unitarian Committee, though it did not mean to do any direct proselytising work, set before itself the task of propagation of the "duties and doctrines of the religion of Christ" as well as the "evidences" of the same, in various ways such as publications, discussions, education, etc. The Committee started active work in a right earnest manner in the shape of a school, a press, and even worship in charge of a recognised minister. It was verily a sort of Unitarian Mission, a name which it assumed later on, and though it did not mean to do any proselytising work whatsoever, it did mean to have disciples. Ram Mohan Roy and Mr. Adam were the two persons who were solely responsible for not only bringing it into existence but even in running it, and

while Mr. Adam served it in the capacity of a missionary, Ram Mohan Roy took most of the monetary responsibility of the organization upon himself, besides doing all that he could by way of preaching Unitarianism through his publications, discussions, etc. That the latter was full of enthusiasm at present for Unitarian Christianity, the only true Christianity according to him, is evident not only from the great interest he was taking and the sacrifice he was making in the propagation of it in India, but from the fact that he most sanguinely hoped for its prevalence all over Europe and America as well, as can be seen from a letter that he wrote about this time to a Unitarian in Baltimore, which is but one of many that he wrote to Unitarians in England and America. Therein among other things he says :—

“ I have now every reason to hope that the truths of Christianity will not be much longer kept hidden under the veil of heathen doctrines and practices, gradually introduced among the followers of Christ, since many lovers of truth are zealously engaged in rendering the religion of Jesus free from corruptions.

“ It is.....a great satisfaction to my conscience to find that the doctrines inculcated by Jesus and his Apostles are quite different from those human inventions which the missionaries are persuaded to profess, and entirely consistent with reason and the revelation delivered by Moses and the prophets. I am, therefore, anxious to support them, even at the risk of my own life. I rely much on the force of truth, which will, I am sure, ultimately prevail. Our number is comparatively small, but I am glad to inform you that none of them can be justly charged with the want of zeal and prudence.”

“ I wish to add, in order that you may set me right, if you find me mistaken,—my view of Christianity is that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal Father, it enjoins them to love one another, without making any distinction of country, caste, colour or creed.”

He writes to the same with regard to their work in India a little later as follows :—

“ Although our adversaries are both numerous and zealous, as the adversaries of truth have always been, yet our prospects are by no means discouraging, if we only have the means of following up what has already been done. We confidently hope that, through these various means the period will be accelerated, when the belief in the Divine Unity and the mission of Christ will universally prevail.”

It is rather strange but none the less true that such a strong and enthusiastic hope that the mission of Christ will universally prevail was extinguished in his heart only a few months later, for we read in a letter written to one Mr. Samuel Smith the following words :—

“ From the disappointment which we have met in our endeavour to promote the cause of Unitarianism, I scarcely entertain any hope of success.”

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## CHAPTER VIII

### HINDU-CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY.

Though Ram Mohan Roy had identified himself altogether with the work of spreading Unitarianism in India, it is of course not to be supposed that he had ceased to be a Hindu theist. That his Unitarianism or as it may be better called Christian Theism was complimentary to or only the perfect form of that theism which he had found in the Hindu Scriptures, particularly the Vedas, is evident from a minor controversy that he was carrying on during these years with the missionaries under the pseudonym of his pundit Shiv Prasad Sarma. He did this sometimes and perhaps was in special need of doing it in this case inasmuch as he was at this time too closely identified with Unitarian Christianity. The cause of this controversy was an attack made by the Baptist missionaries on Hinduism in general and on Vedantism in particular. This together with the main end which was aimed at, viz., proselytism, aroused the indignation and even the animosity of Ram Mohan Roy, and he brought out, during the course of two or three years that this controversy lasted, four numbers of what he called "The Brahmanical Magazine, or the Missionary and the Brahmin, being a vindication of the Hindu Religion against the attack of Christian missionaries." This pamphlet, (it may now well be called so), including the two prefaces that he later on attached to the numbers is of about 50 pages, and is of a defensive as well as offensive character. While the defensive part follows more or less the line of his previous controversies with the Hindus themselves in his defence of what he called Hindu Theism, the

offensive part follows that of his usual controversy with the missionaries in his defence of the Precepts of Jesus, though of course in this his last campaign he carries the warfare further into his opponents' camp than he had done previously.

In the preface to the second edition of the same with regard to the object that he set before himself in writing this, he says :—

“ In the first number of the Magazine I replied to the arguments they adduced against the Shastras, or immediate explanations of the Vedas, our original Sacred Books: and in the second I answered the objections urged against the Puranas and Tantras, or Historical Illustrations of the Hindu Mythology, showing that the doctrines of the former are much more rational than the religion which the missionaries profess, and that those of the latter, if unreasonable, are not more so than their Christian faith.”

He says a little further on that his object is not to oppose Christianity, but to be left in undisturbed possession of his own faith, or at best to be convinced of the superiority of Christianity by argument and not by abuse :—

“ It is well-known to the whole world, that no people on earth are more tolerant than the Hindus, who believe all men to be equally within the reach of Divine beneficence, which embraces the good of every religious sect and denomination: therefore it cannot be imagined that my object in publishing this magazine was to oppose Christianity.”

In the Preface to the first edition, he complains of the violation of the religious neutrality promised by the British which, he says, is constituted in the following acts of the missionary :—

“The first way is that of publishing and distributing among the natives various books, large and small, reviling both religions, (*i.e.* Hinduism and Mohammedanism), and abusing and ridiculing the gods and saints of the former: the second way is that of standing in front of the doors of the natives or in the public roads to preach the excellency of their own religion and debasedness of that of others: the third way is that if any natives of low origin become Christians from the desire of gain or from any other motives, these gentlemen employ and maintain them as a necessary encouragement to others to follow their example.”

He says further on in continuation of the same as follows :—

“It is true that the apostles of Jesus Christ used to preach the superiority of the Christian religion to the natives of different countries. But we must recollect that they were not of the rulers of those countries where they preached. Were the missionaries likewise to preach the Gospel and distribute books in countries not conquered by the English, such as Turkey, Persia, etc, which are much nearer England, they would be esteemed a body of men truly zealous in propagating religion and in the following the example of the founders of Christianity. In Bengal, where the English are the sole rulers, and where the mere name of

Englishman is sufficient to frighten people, an encroachment upon the rights of her poor, timid and humble inhabitants and upon their religion cannot be viewed in the eyes of God or the public as a justifiable act. We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries, and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and the abstinence from the slaughter even of animals: as well as our division into castes, which has been the source of want of unity among us."

Further on he says :—

" But as the English are celebrated for the manifestation of humanity and for administering justice, and as a great many gentlemen among them are noticed to have had an aversion to violate equity, it would tend to destroy their acknowledged character if they follow the example of the former savage conquerors in disturbing the established religion of the country, because to introduce a religion by means of abuse and insult, or by affording the hope of worldly gain, is inconsistent *with reason and justice*. *If by the force of argument they can prove the truth of their own religion and the falsity of that of Hindus, many would of course embrace their doctrines, and in case they fail to prove this, they should not undergo such useless trouble, nor tease Hindus any longer by their attempts at conversion.*"

The arguments advanced here raise a very important question, or rather a series of questions which are engaging, particularly during the last decade or so, the most serious attention of a few of the most thoughtful

among missionaries and indigenous Christian leaders in India and in other countries such as Japan and China, for there too, while the relationship of the white and the non-white races is not the same as in India, it is certainly of a kind which is not free from the predominance of the white races. During the last century or two, wherever Christianity has gone, it has been closely associated with Western Civilization and in some countries with Imperialism as in India. These constitute the main stumbling-blocks in the way of Christianity and it has often been made to serve as a handmaid in the work of extending and consolidating European Civilization, Capitalism and Imperialism. Owing to this, Christianity comes to-day to these countries as a way of gain and not of godliness which it essentially is. Most people who join it do so for the material gain that they get from it rather than for its spiritual value which alone makes it the divine thing it is, and where it has gone in its pure form it has involved suffering and even crucifixion in the manner of Jesus Christ himself instead of worldly profit.

Hence the objection to mission-work and especially to proselytism, under the circumstances in which it has been carried on in India, is a fundamental one. Is proselytising in the best sense of the term possible without persecution? This is the question which the most thoughtful among Christians are beginning to put to themselves, and a proper answer to it will lead to a separation from the Christian faith of the non-essentials and will show in what exactly it is that the Kingdom of Heaven lies. During a full century that has passed since Ram Mohan Roy raised this question, a great deal of work has been done by Christian Missions and Churches, but all such work,

to take it at its best, is more of the nature of preparation for than establishment of the Kingdom of God itself, *i.e.*, it is more like the work of John the Baptist than that of Jesus Christ himself. To this work Ram Mohan Roy and the school of thought that he founded with its great leaders such as Devendranath Tagore and more particularly Keshub Chunder Sen have contributed as much as the large number of missionaries themselves, and though both these agencies worked on different lines and at times even opposed each other, the work of both was equally helpful. What is needed now is a union of these two streams of thought and life, an union which, though it may be found to take place among very few at first, is sure to spread over larger and larger numbers until it will take hold of the whole land and ultimately may show the Kingdom of Heaven as among the Hindus in a new light to the whole world to the lasting good thereof.

In all probability it was this proselytising work of the Christian missionaries which gave a different turn to the religious work of Ram Mohan Roy and was the cause of his starting the Brahma Sabha which came to be called the Brahma Samaj a few years later. Ram Mohan had already declared himself a Unitarian and was doing his best to spread it in India, a task for which he had started the Unitarian mission at a large cost to himself. In this work he was thwarted by the orthodox among the Hindus, but much more by the orthodox Christians. In addition to this there came these wanton attacks on the part of Christian missionaries on the Hindu religion, followed by a systematic propaganda and

proselytism. Ram Mohan Roy objected to this mainly on the ground that the Christian missionaries ought not to do this inasmuch as they belonged to the same race and land as the conquerors of the country, and he feared that this would reduce their proselytising work more or less to the level of what was done by the Mohammedans when they were in power in India. His fear was that this might lead a number of poorer and middle class but indigent Hindus to adopt the Christian faith, not from any conviction but from need and necessity, and thereby permanent harm might be done to the Hindu community. In this connection in the Number IV of the same magazine which is the last of the series, he says :—

“ Since the Hindu population in Bengal, from the circumstances of their early marriages, and their continual residence either at home or at an inconsiderable distance from their birth-place, and from the enjoyment of local comfort under the peaceful sway of the British nation, has been increasing with uncommon rapidity, and as they are, at the same time, prohibited from foreign trade by their religious prejudices, prevented from entering into the military service owing to their habitual aversion to the war, and do not now, as in former times, receive gifts of land free from assessments which tended much to encourage an idle life, many families have become very indigent and a greater number must, sooner or later, be reduced to poverty. It is, therefore, more than probable, that the most weak and needy among them may be induced, by the hope of worldly advantages, to sell their conscience and their religion in the same manner as a great many

Israelites have been persuaded to profess Christianity, by the severe policy adopted towards Jews on the one hand, and the encouragement to apostatize held out on the other, by societies established in Europe for their conversion."

It is to this fear of apostasy of large classes of people, particularly among the poor, a fear not without foundation as has been amply proved by the history of the mission-work done in the past hundred years, that the change in the religious position of Ram Mohan Roy which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Brahma Samaj may be traced. The very first indication of this may be seen in the passage which immediately follows the one quoted above, a passage in which Ram Mohan gives expression to his creed which may be called Hindu Theism and which closes the whole series. He says therein:—

"I shall now, in a few words, for the information of the Missionary Gentlemen, lay down our religious creed. In conformity with the Precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the Holy Vedant, though disregarded by the generality of moderns, we look up to the One Being as the animating a . regulating principle of the whole collective body of the universe, and as the origin of all individual souls which in a manner somewhat similar, vivify and govern their particular bodies: and we reject Idolatry in every form and under whatsoever veil of sophistry it may be practised, either in adoration of an artificial, a natural, or an imaginary object. The divine homage which we offer, consists solely in the practice of *Daya* or benevolence towards each



and not in a fanciful faith or in certain motions of the feet, legs, arms, head, tongue or other bodily organs, in pulpit or before a temple. Among other objects, we frequently offer up our humble thanks to God, for the blessings of British Rule in India and sincerely pray, that it may continue in its beneficent operations for centuries to come."

Thus was taking place the transition from "the Precepts of Jesus" which Ram Mohan Roy was holding up for the past few years as the absolute standard in morals and religion, for all nations and peoples, to "the Precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the holy Vedant" which he under the pseudonym of his Pundit Shiv Prasad Varma now holds up before the missionaries as the religion of the new reformers. This was due largely to the fear mentioned above. Another indication and a very noteworthy one, of the same change is seen in another tract that Ram Mohan wrote about this time under the pseudonym of his friend Prasanna Kumar Tagore, a tract which he addressed to his countrymen and which was entitled "Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in the One True God." The object of publishing it is said to be as follows:—

"My object in publishing this tract is to recommend those to whom it is addressed, to avoid using harsh or abusive language in their religious intercourse with European Missionaries, either respecting them or the objects of their worship, however much this may be countenanced by the example of some of these gentlemen."

The following is the substance of the tract itself, which is a very small one and in which Ram Mohan

has drawn up what may be called the creed of the Brahma Samaj as well as its relation to different religious bodies.

“ Those who firmly believe on the authority of the Vedas, that God is “one *only* without an equal,” and that “ He cannot be known either through the medium of language, thought or vision: how can he be known except as existing, *the origin and support of the universe?* ”—and who endeavour to regulate their conduct by the following precept, “ He who is desirous of eternal happiness should regard another as he regards himself, and the happiness and misery of another as his own,” ought to manifest the warmest affection towards such of their own countrymen as maintain the same faith and practice, even although they have not all studied the Vedas for themselves, but have professed a belief in God only through an acquaintance with their general design. Many among the ten classes of Sannyasins, and all the followers of Guru Nanak, of Dadu, and of Kabir, as well as of Santa, etc. profess the religious sentiments abovementioned. It is our unquestionable duty invariably to treat them as our brethren. No doubt should be entertained of their future salvation, merely because they receive instruction, and practise their sacred music, in the vernacular dialect. ”

“ Amongst foreigners, those Europeans who believe God to be in every sense One, and worship him alone in spirit, and who extend their benevolence to man as the highest service to God, should be regarded by us with affection, on the

ground of the object of their worship being the same as ours. We should feel no reluctance to co-operate with them in religious matters, merely because they consider Jesus Christ as the messenger of God and their Spiritual Teacher : for oneness in the object of worship and sameness of religious practice should produce attachment between the worshippers. "

" Amongst Europeans, those who believe Jesus Christ to be God himself, and conceive him to be possessed of a particular form, and maintain Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be one God, should not be treated in an unfriendly manner. On the contrary, we should act towards them in the same manner as we act towards those of our countrymen who, without forming any external image, meditate upon Rama and other supposed incarnations, and believe in their unity. "

" Again, those amongst Europeans who believing Jesus Christ to be the Supreme Being moreover construct various images of him, should not be hated. On the contrary, it becomes us to act towards those Europeans in the same manner as we act towards such as believe Rama etc, to be incarnations of God, and form external images of them. For the religious principles of the two last-mentioned sects of foreigners are one and the same with those of the two similar sects among Hindoos, although they are clothed in a different garb. "

" When any belonging to the second and third classes of Europeans endeavours to make converts of us, the believers in the only living and true God, even then we should feel no resentment towards

them, but rather compassion, on account of their blindness to the errors into which they themselves have fallen since it is almost impossible, as every-day's experience teaches us, for men when possessed of wealth and power, to perceive their own defects. "

These are some of the chief principles that have guided the working of the Brahma Samaj for the last hundred years or so, and which came to be enunciated by Ram Mohan Roy as part of a new programme in religious reform that he was setting before himself and his country owing to the proselytising character of the work of the English and European missionaries in India. The seed of the Brahma-Sabha was sown here, though the Sabha was actually started about 5 years later.

## CHAPTER IX

### UNITARIAN AND TRINITARIAN CONTROVERSY.

Meanwhile Ram Mohan's main controversy with the missionaries, which the publication of his *Precepts of Jesus* had started some years back, was going on as vigorously as ever. His *Second Appeal* was replied to by Dr. Marshman elaborately, and Ram Mohan replied to it in the same manner in a book of about 200 pages. It was called the *Final Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus*. This work was printed at what is called "the Unitarian Press," particularly as Ram Mohan Roy was refused the printing of it by the Baptist Mission Press, which had hitherto published his first two Appeals.

In the Preface to this Appeal he mentions the various objects with which he pursues this controversy, though it has lost him some friends and has prevented him from rendering other services to his countrymen by means of his publications in the vernacular etc. These objects are I. to convince those Christians who already believe in the revelation of the Bible of the truth of what he considers to be the true interpretation thereof, II. to make those who are indifferent about religion to "devote their minds to the investigation and discovery of truth," III and "to solicit the patient attention of such individuals as are rather unfavourable to the doctrines of Christianity as generally promulgated from finding them at variance with common sense, that they may examine and judge whether its doctrines are really such as they are understood to be by the popular opinion which now prevails." In order to advance this threefold object,

more than half of which is even missionary in its character, he even promised in the same to start a monthly publication, "to be devoted to Biblical Criticism, and to subject Unitarian as well as Trinitarian doctrines to the test of fair argument." He even invites the missionaries to this task asking them to prove their doctrine "beginning with the book of Genesis" to the end of the Bible, himself volunteering to pay all the expenses of such publication.

In the Introductory Remarks to the Book itself he says that it is not he who has started this controversy, but that it has been forced on him by the Reverend Editor of the *Friend of India*. He says: "I beg to call the attention of the public to the language of the Introduction to 'The Precepts of Jesus' compiled by me, and which was my first publication connected with Christianity. They may observe therein, that so far from teaching any 'opposite doctrines,' or, 'rejecting the prevailing opinions held by the great body of Christians,' I took every precaution against giving the least offence to the prejudices of any one, and consequently limited my labour to what I supposed best calculated for the improvement of those whose received opinions are widely different from those of Christians." He says further on that as this publication of the *Precepts of Jesus* was taken exception to, and as he was reproached and censured by the Editor of the "*Friend of India*," he issued his first Appeal with regard to which he says: "In that appeal I carefully avoided entering into any discussion as to the doctrines held up as the fundamental principles of Christianity by the Editor." He says further on that when the Editor of the "*Friend of India*" in his review of this First Appeal introduced

subjects concerning Atonement etc. he had to defend his own position with regard to them in his second Appeal, and that is how he came to discuss them. In all this he means to say that he did not begin the discussion concerning these subjects, particularly as it might wound the feelings of many among Christians, but that he was compelled to do it by the Missionaries themselves.

Coming to the body of the book itself, Ram Mohan Roy at first discusses in detail the doctrine of Atonement, with regard to which he gives his own explanation instead of the received interpretation as among the orthodox Christians as follows:—

“To avoid such a stigma upon the pure religion of Jesus, it is incumbent, I think, upon us to follow the latter mode of interpretation, and to understand from the passages referred to, that Jesus, the spiritual Lord and King of Jews and Gentiles, in fulfilment of the duties of his mission, exposed his own life for the benefit of his subjects, purged their sins by his doctrines, and persevered in executing the commands of God, even to the undergoing of bodily suffering in the miserable death of the cross—a self-devotion or sacrifice, of which no Jewish high-priest had offered an example.”

Concerning the same he says further on:—

“Hence, it appears more consistent with the context and the general tenor of scripture, to understand by the phrase, “The offering of the body of Jesus Christ,” the death of Jesus as a spiritual and virtual sacrifice for the sins of all

those for whom he became a mediator inasmuch as by that death the blessed saviour testified his perfect obedience and devotion to the will of his heavenly Father, and thereby vindicated to himself the unlimited favour of God. During his life he instructed mankind how they might render themselves worthy of the Divine mercy : by his death he qualified himself to be their intercessor at the heavenly throne, when sincere repentance was offered by them instead of perfect duty. We may easily account for the adoption by the apostles, with respect to him, of such terms as sacrifice and atonement for sin, and their representing Jesus as the high-priest, engaged to take away the sins of the world by means of his blood. These were modes of speech made use of in allusion to the sacrifices and blood-offerings which the Jews and their high-priest used to make for the remission of sins and the apostles wisely accommodated their instructions to the ideas and forms of language familiar to those whom they addressed."

It is in this way that Ram Mohan Roy explains or explains away to a certain extent the true significance of the death of Jesus Christ which has held such an important place in all Christian thinking and influenced and inspired much of the very best and highest action in the lives of the true followers of Jesus Christ these twenty centuries. Love is the last term in the moral and religious vocabulary of man, and all true love logically ends or is synonymous with sacrifice, and it is by this that the death of Jesus Christ has to be interpreted and understood. The Cross is the consummation of the life of Jesus, and it is by



that that His whole life is to be understood and not *vice versa* as that would be explaining the higher by the lower. The vicarious death of Jesus is a new category in the religious thinking of the world and as such it explains not only his whole life better but gives a meaning to a very large part of the inner history of man, explaining at the same time the work of God therein.

Next he takes up the question of Trinity and deals with it at length trying to refute all the arguments advanced thereupon by the Editor of the "Friend of India." Most of his arguments are the same as those of the Unitarians in the west, and turn on the verbal interpretation of those verses of the Bible which have been looked upon by orthodox Christians as sanctioning their Trinitarian belief. Leaving this exegetical part of the controversy, one may say that it was at this fundamental fact which is the foundation of Christianity, viz, God's humiliation of Himself in His love of man, that Ram Mohan Roy along with so many philosophers in the past as well as in the present stumbled. This was a rock of offence and a stone of stumbling to him. The same thing that is said of love with regard to atonement in the last paragraph may be said with regard to this also, and whether we think of Incarnation or Atonement which are the actions of God with regard to Man, or of the Trinity which pertains to the inner life of God within Himself, it is love that will supply the key wherewith we may open the secrets of these mysterious and wonderful problems. Such a verse as this wherein it is said that "he laid aside his glory and took on himself the form of a servant" can be understood only when one understands the true meaning of love. It is of its very essence to humili-

liate itself to come down and to go lower than the level of those who are its objects. St. John says, God is Love. He is Love more than Power, Wisdom etc. and it is of this inmost life and essence that we have the manifestation in the life and above all in the death of Christ Jesus. That the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit and above all this mystery of mysteries, which is so only to those who are lacking in faith but which can be read by him who runs provided he has faith, that this basal fact of all true religion and life cannot be understood unless one becomes a babe is seen in the case of even such a man as Mohammud who, though he accepted Jesus Christ as the greatest of all prophets who came before himself and accepted most of his teachings, yet failed to understand just this crucifixion and the humiliation it involved for Ruh-i-Allah, *i.e.*, Christ, and consequently had recourse to the belief that Jesus was removed to Heaven while he was in prison and another person was substituted in his place on the cross. Others, among whom Ram Mohan Roy is one, while accepting this fact of the crucifixion of Christ have so interpreted it as to take away its inner meaning and value.

Ram Mohan Roy, though very strong in his understanding and interpretation of the Old Testament in which perhaps his Arabic studies helped him a good deal, was far from so with regard to the New Testament, and was at his weakest especially in his treatment of St. Paul and St. John. His was a rationalistic temperament through and through and hence the mystic teaching of both these apostles was far from congenial to him: it would seem as if he had an inherent incapacity even to understand their standpoint and vital experience which was behind it, much

less to accept it. He rarely even so much as praises them, and in this he is very different from such great Indians and his own followers as Keshub Chunder Sen and Mahadev Govind Ranade, the former of whom came very close to the spiritual experiences of those two Apostles, while the latter was remarkably impressed by the fact of the conversion of St. Paul to which he justly attributed, owing to his deep insight into all historical matters, the great consequences which it has produced.

To quote an example of the way in which he misunderstands the teaching of St. John as given in his Gospel, particularly that of the first verse, first chapter, which runs: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:—

“In the beginning: Or, from the first, *i.e.* from the commencement of the gospel dispensation or of the ministry of Christ.”

“The Word was with God. He withdrew from the world to commune with God, and to receive divine instructions and qualifications, previously to his public ministry.”

“And the Word was a God. “Was God.” Newcome. Jesus received a commission as a prophet of the Most High, and was invested with extraordinary miraculous powers. But in the Jewish phraseology they were called gods to whom the word of God came.”

Some of the interpretation that follows is of the same kind. That this kind of interpretation is altogether wrong can be seen at once by any ordinary student of the Bible. The fact that the Gospel of St. John teaches most clearly the Divinity of

Christ is admitted by all scholars, whether orthodox or heretic, Trinitarian or Unitarian, and the only recourse of those who find it hard to accept that doctrine is to question the authorship of it by St. John. Not to admit the authenticity or the authority of this Gospel is a thing altogether different, but after the inspiration of it has been admitted as with Ram Mohan it is impossible to escape from the acceptance of the Divinity of Jesus Christ which is clearly proved therein, or rather to show which is the sole object of that remarkable book. Of course, it is not to be understood that much of the argument advanced in this big volume is of the same kind as shown above, for Ram Mohan was no ordinary scholar and with his knowledge of Arabic, Hebrew and Greek as well as other literature concerning Biblical criticism he was no ordinary exegete.

Though not accepting the doctrines of Atonement or of Incarnation, Ram Mohan Roy looks upon Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Saviour, the Lord and the King, all which terms he uses again and again with reference to him in this book. While quoting Locke and Newton, with "whose sentiments as to the person of Christ" his own agree, he says with regard to Jesus "that he is the anointed Lord and King promised and sent from God, is worthy of worship for his mediation and meritorious death, but by no means as a being possessed of a twofold nature, divine and human, perfect God and perfect Man."

Ram Mohan Roy concluded his "Essay by offering up thanks to the Supreme Dispenser of the events of this universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former





Rulers, and placed it under the government of the English—a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends. ”

As regards the impression of this work made upon some of the thinking people among the English in India, it cannot be better summed up than in the words of the *Indian Gazette* which spoke of the Raja as “a most gigantic combatant in the theological field, a combatant who, we are constrained to say, has not met with his match here.”

## CHAPTER X

### UNITARIAN PROPAGANDA.

A few months after this final Appeal was published in the beginning of 1824, Ram Mohan Roy wrote a long letter to an American Unitarian gentleman named Rev. Henry Ware in reply to his questions with regard to "the Prospects of Christianity and the means of promoting its reception in India," a letter from which much of the mind of Ram Mohan concerning this very important subject may be known. In the beginning of the letter he says :—

"I have now prepared such replies to these questions as my knowledge authorizes and my conscience permits and now submit them to your judgement. There is one question at the concluding part of your letter, (to wit, "Whether it is desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons?"), which I pause to answer, as I am led to believe, from reason which is set forth in Scripture that "in every nation he that *feareth* God and worketh *righteousness* is accepted with him", in whatever form of worship he may have been brought to glorify God. Nevertheless I presume to think, that Christianity, if properly inculcated, has a greater tendency to improve the moral and political state of mankind, than any other known religious system."

The following is the tribute he pays to America for its forwardness in the work of what he considers



to be religious reform, a tribute which breathes much good will towards that great country :—

“ Your country, however, in free inquiry into religious truth, excels even England, and I have therefore every reason to hope, that the truths of Christianity will soon, throughout the United States, triumph over the present prevailing corruptions. I presume to say, that no native of those States can be more fervent than myself in praying for the uninterrupted happiness of your country and for what I cannot but deem essential to its prosperity—the perpetual union of all the States under one general Government. ”

Next Ram Mohan answers the questions one by one, of which there are as many as twenty. He draws a very gloomy picture of the prospects of Christianity in India, quoting a good deal from Abbé Dubois, the great catholic missionary, who had then recently published his remarkable book “ The Hindu Manners and Customs,” and in which he had said “ that under existing circumstances there is no human possibility of converting the Hindoos to any sect of Christianity.” Ram Mohan is more enthusiastic over and hopeful of the future of Unitarian Christianity in India, which, as he says, through its first and only Missionary in Bengal, the Rev. Mr. Adam, had “ already received every countenance from several respectable European gentlemen, and from a great number of the leading part of the native community in Calcutta.” Ram Mohan Roy was too modest to add his own name as the other great influence, (perhaps much greater than that of Mr. Adam inasmuch as he had been the means of converting him to Unitarianism), which had made

Unitarian Christianity respectable among Indians of his time. He says that "even those who are inimical to every religion admit, that the Unitarian system is more conformable to human understanding than any other known creed." He adds that though "the sincere conversion to Trinitarian Christianity" of the educated among Indians whose number is small is "morally impossible," "they would not scruple to embrace, or at least to encourage; the Unitarian system of Christianity, were it inculcated on them in an intelligible manner." In order to do this, he says, "it would be advisable, in my humble opinion, that one or two, if not more gentlemen, well qualified to teach English literature and science, and noted for their moral conduct, should be employed to cultivate the understandings of the present ignorant generation, and thereby improve their hearts, that the cause of truth may triumph over false religion, and the desired comfort and happiness may be enjoyed by men of all classes." Ram Mohan does not think much of Mission-work such as "public preachings," even though that may be done by Unitarian missionaries, nor does he expect much result from the translations of the Bible in the various vernaculars of the country, though he does believe and to the question whether it would "be useful to establish Unitarian Missionary Schools for the instruction of the children of natives in the rudiments of a European education, in the English language, in Christian morality, mingling with 'it very little instruction relating to the doctrines of Christianity, leaving them chiefly or wholly out of view, to be learned afterwards from our books and our example" he replies that it "would be certainly of great use, and this is the only way of improving

their understandings, and ultimately ameliorating their hearts." In the course of this reply Ram Mohan makes a very important observation concerning the translation of the Bible into Asiatic languages, which is not without value even now. He says:—

"Ideas in general are as differently expressed in the idioms of the East from those of the West, as the East is remote from the West. Greater difficulty therefore must be experienced by a native of Europe in communicating European ideas in the idioms of Asia, than conveying Asiatic ideas into the languages of Europe; so a native of Asia experiences greater inconvenience in expressing Asiatic ideas in European idioms, than in translating European ideas into an Asiatic language."

With regard to what he himself did in that direction, he adds:—

"About four years ago, the Rev. Mr. Adam, and another British missionary, Rev. Mr. Yates, both well reputed for their oriental and classical acquirements, engaged, in common with myself to translate the New Testament into Bengali, and we met twice every week and had for our guidance all the translations of the Bible, by different authors, which we could procure. Notwithstanding our exertions, we were obliged to leave the accurate translation of several phrases to future consideration, and for my own part I felt discontented with the translation adopted of several passages, though I tried frequently, when alone at home, to select more eligible expressions, and applied to native friends for their aid for that purpose. I beg to

assure you, that I (though a native of this country) do not recollect having engaged myself once, during my life, in so difficult a task, as the translation of the New Testament into Bengali."

In accordance with the view advanced herein, a Unitarian Mission was started in Calcutta with Mr. Adam as its missionary. The Mission was liberally helped by Ram Mohan Roy and his Indian friends, but it is not known if it received much or any help in money from the Unitarians either in England or America. As for the invitation that Ram Mohan made to them to come to India for the spread of European culture and science, it did not result in any activity on their part, and none came forward to do such philanthropic or mission-work on behalf of Unitarianism, which has all along singularly lacked in missionary enthusiasm.

But, meanwhile, what the Unitarians were too slow to do or incapable of doing was about to be done on a very large scale by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the country which perhaps has done more for education than any other. An invitation was being sent to the Presbyterians in Scotland to start mission-work in India in 1823, and it is interesting to find Ram Mohan, in his keen desire for "the diffusion of religious and moral knowledge in India" and for the spread of education which has been a specialty of that body in India, even going so far as to join in this petition to them that was sent from India. Indeed there was a great deal common between the Scotch Reformers and this Hindu Iconoclast and Reformer, and he sympathized with them so much that he even avowed himself a member of their congregation in

of character, while the educational work done through these institutions is of a very high character and has contributed not a little to its general uplift. A number of other Missions have followed the Scottish Church in this matter, and the output so far as general education is concerned is very large and has gone far to build up the New Hindustan. Therefore it is indeed a matter of joyful interest to think that the man who has been justly called the Father of New India was associated from the very first in this great act of the educational uplift of the country by Christian Missions.

In the year 1823, Ram Mohan Roy under the pseudonym of Ram Das carried on a minor controversy with a European gentleman named Dr. Tyler, who, accepting the challenge of Ram Mohan thrown out in his Preface to the final Appeal to the missionaries to carry on the controversy concerning the Divinity of Christ proving it step by step and book by book through the Bible, called upon Ram Mohan Roy to proceed with the matter with him. Ram Mohan refused to do this with one who was only a layman, Dr. Tyler being a surgeon in the employ of the Company, telling him at the same time that he would do it if Dr. Tyler would find some more accredited representative of his religion than himself *i. e.* some missionary or pastor through whom the controversy might be carried on, Dr. Tyler objecting to this mode of procedure wrote to a public paper complaining of Ram Mohan's refusal, whereupon the latter under the name of Ram Das, a supposed Hindu, wrote making common cause with Dr. Tyler against Ram Mohan. This exasperated the doctor more than ever, and there was a consequent exchange of a few letters between him and Ram 'Das.

The stand that Ram Mohan takes in this short epistolary controversy is almost the same that he had taken all along, viz. the similarity between Hinduism and Christianity which lies chiefly in their belief in Incarnation, and he implies therein that it is for this that he rejects both of them. In the very last letter he says with much emphasis that "The Incarnation of the Deity is the common basis of Hinduism and Christianity." Being himself against this belief, he puts himself out of the pale of both Hinduism and Christianity, a position in which he has been confirmed since his time by the Brahma Samaj. By classing both Hinduism and Christianity together, Ram Mohan Roy has clearly shown that they are more akin to each other than to either Unitarianism or Brahmaism. It was only in the last days of Keshub Chunder Sen, the great successor of Ram Mohan that the truth dawned upon him that this similarity between these two faiths, instead of being a stumbling-block which it was so long to the Brahma Samaj, was a stepping-stone to a real synthesis or harmony of the two faiths, but the old leaven was too strong even for him, and moreover he passed away before finishing his work. However it is very strange and not without a touch of divinely-appointed irony in it, a sort of Nemesis as if it were, that such a thing should have been done within the Brahma Samaj itself, and that too under the leadership of Keshub, the greatest leader thereof. The present writer might add in all humility that in his own case the cycle has been completed inasmuch as in his spiritual development along the line of thought laid down by Keshub Chunder Sen, it was through his study of Vaishnavism, the special school of Hinduism which believes in Incarnation, that he

East." When this memorial was not paid heed to by the Government, Ram Mohan and his friends took the next step viz. that of appealing to the King in Council. This Appeal is described by the same writer as "one of the noblest pieces of English to which Ram Mohan put his hand." She goes on to say as follows in regard to it :—

"Its stately periods and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great orators of a century ago. In a language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British history."

This petition also was disregarded and the Press Ordinance came into force. There were only four papers at this time in the vernacular and of these two were conducted by Ram Mohan. Looking to this earliest stage of the political life of Modern India, it reflects no ordinary credit on Ram Mohan that he should have fought for the freedom of the Press in this noble, dignified and at the same time thoroughgoing manner, and that he should have conceived the mission of the Press to be so lofty. But in this as in everything else he was the pioneer and leader of Modern India, and the ideals that he laid down for the guidance of life in various departments were so very high and comprehensive that they have not yet been antiquated; rather it is now that they are being fulfilled.

Another activity with which he specially concerned himself was that of the spread of Education in India. For this purpose he started several schools

and colleges, and co-operated with every one who was interested in education. He had started some years since the Hindu College in co-operation with David Hare, and in the year 1822 started an Anglo-Indian school, for the maintenance of which he paid chiefly from his own pocket. Some two or three years after this we find him starting the Vedant College, a college in which Sanskrit was taught along with other subjects such as science etc. But what is more important than all these was the leading part that he took in the great controversy then raging between the 'Orientalists' and the 'Anglicists' with regard to the kind of Education that was to be imparted by the Government to the youth of the country. Opinion was sharply divided between these two parties and both of them had among them eminent Englishmen. While the Government was about to yield to the importunities of the Orientalists among whom there were Sanskrit scholars of note, Ram Mohan threw all the weight of his personality and manifold experience on the other side and won for it the victory which it got, a victory to which we owe the Education that India has been receiving for the last century. Of all men in India at that time Ram Mohan Roy knew best both the advantages and disadvantages of the old oriental system, and besides he himself had derived ~~through~~ through his studies of Sanskrit and Arabic literature great benefit and was the noblest product thereof. In spite of this he was for the Western system which he upheld with all the vigour of which he was capable, maintaining that the new system that was then coming into vogue in Europe itself was with its practical knowledge far preferable to the Medieval system, whether of the West or of the East. At bottom it was



not so much a question between the Western and the Eastern system as between the Medieval and the Modern. As for the medium through which this education was to be imparted Ram Mohan was in favour of the English language as compared with Sanskrit, inasmuch as such subjects as mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy with other useful sciences which he wanted to be taught to Indian young men in preference to Sanskrit grammar, philology and philosophy, which were the chief subjects of the old Indian system, could be better learnt in that language than in Sanskrit or any other vernacular of the land. With this in view he wrote a "Letter on English Education" to Lord Amherst pressing all the claims of that education on his mind. Thus this strong advocacy of his had not a little to do with the ultimate choice that the Government made and to which we owe our present system of Education, a system which, in spite of all its defects, and they are many, has done more than any other single agency to unite India and to make it what we find it to-day. For this India is indebted not a little to this great man along with Lord William Bentinck, Macaulay, David Hare etc. However it is worth recording in this connection that Ram Mohan Roy was not from the first an advocate of the ~~Western~~ Western system of education. As early as 1815, he had begun to think of the question and was at first in favour of the system in vogue, but David Hare who was at first only a watch-maker in Calcutta but soon came to the front as an educationist of note was for the more practical system of the West and he soon converted Ram Mohan and many others among Indians as well as Europeans to his views. But since Ram Mohan came to see the advisability of

introducing the western system, his enthusiasm for it was so great that he himself, in spite of his many preoccupations, wrote books in the vernacular on Geography and Grammar. Thus like Milton, he was not above doing what would be considered by ordinary people little tasks.

During these years he carried on a most uncompromising campaign against the cruel custom of Suttee, and ultimately succeeded in securing its abolition at the hands of the Government. It is one of the greatest measures of Social or Humanitarian Reform and Ram Mohan's name will ever be associated with that of Lord William Bentinck for having removed this great blot on Hindu Civilization. While the Government was hesitating between two opinions *viz.*, whether this cruel and inhuman custom should be put down at once or by slow stages, Ram Mohan was carrying on an agitation in favour of its abolition at once through his paper as well as by writing pamphlets etc. He went to the root of the matter and showed in a tract called "Modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females according to the Hindu Law of inheritance," that it was because no provision was made by the modern Hindus for women as such in the inheritance of property that such a cruel custom as the ~~Suttee~~ and other evils such as walking "in the paths of unrighteousness" arose. He says that that was not the practice of the ancient Hindus and he pleads for a proper share in inheritance to be given to woman in accordance with the ancient law and says among other things the following :—

"It is not from religious prejudices and early impressions only, that Hindu widows burn.

themselves on the piles of their deceased husbands, but also from their witnessing the distress in which widows of the same rank in life are involved and the insults and slights to which they are daily subjected, that they become in a great measure regardless of their existence after the death of their husbands: and this indifference accompanied with the hope of future reward held out to them leads them to the horrible act of suicide. These restraints on female inheritance encourage, in a great degree, polygamy, a frequent source of the greatest misery in native families: a grand object of Hindus being to secure a provision for their male offspring, the law, which relieves them from the necessity of giving an equal portion to their wives, removes a principal restraint on the indulgence of their inclinations in respect to the number they marry. Some of them, especially Brahmans of higher birth, marry ten, twenty or thirty women, either for some small consideration, or merely to gratify their brutal inclinations, leaving a great many of them, both during their life-time and after their death, to the mercy of their own paternal relations. The evil consequences arising from such polygamy the public may easily guess, from the nature of the fact itself, without my being reduced to the mortification of particularising those which are known by the native public to be of daily occurrence. To these women there are left only three modes of conduct to pursue after the death of their husbands. I. To live a miserable life as entire slaves to others, without indulging any hope of support from another husband. II. To walk in the

paths of unrighteousness for their maintenance and independence. III. To die on the funeral pile of their husbands, loaded with the applause and honour of their neighbours. It cannot pass unnoticed by those who are acquainted with the state of society in India, that the number of female suicides in the single province of Bengal, when compared with those of any other British provinces, is almost ten to one: we may safely attribute this disproportion chiefly to the greater frequency of a plurality of wives among the natives of Bengal, and to their total neglect in providing for the maintenance of their females."

As to how this work of actually burning the widows was carried on, we read about it in an address presented by Ram Mohan Roy and his coadjutors to Lord William Bentinck in 1830 as a counter-demonstration to an appeal made to him by orthodox Hindus against the abolition of Suttee, as follows:—

"It is, however, very fortunate that the British Government under whose protection the lives of both the males and females of India have been happily placed by Providence, has, after diligent inquiry, ascertained that even those inferior authorities, permitting wilful ascent by a widow to the funeral pile, have been practically set aside, and that, in gross violation of their language and spirit, the relatives of widows have, in the burning of those infatuated females, almost invariably used to fasten them down on the pile, and heap over them large quantities of wood and other materials adequate to the prevention of their escape—an outrage on humanity which has

been frequently perpetrated under the indirect sanction of native officers, undeservedly employed for the security of life and preservation of peace and tranquility. "

Ram Mohan Roy, while carrying on this agitation, had to fight not only against the bigotry of the Hindus but also the inertia of the Government, which was slow to move at first from fear lest its interference with the socio-religious customs of the country might be looked upon as an unjustifiable intrusion on its part. At first it thought that the agitation of reformers like Ram Mohan and his comrades would be sufficient to remove the evil custom, but the number of the Suttees instead of decreasing under this propaganda actually increased in the year 1825, nearly 650 widows being burnt alive in Bengal alone, Calcutta and the district round about supplying more than half of that number. The eyes of the Government were opened once more at this, but still it was not for total suppression at once, though the judges of most of the Courts pleaded for it. In the meantime Bentinck came as the Viceroy and he set about it in a resolute manner. He made sure from inquiries that the Indian Army would not be affected if the custom were abolished; and the judges of the High Court were already with him. He invited Ram Mohan Roy to a private interview with him, and though the latter at first refused to go when he was called by the Viceroy as such, excusing himself on the ground that he was a *Vânprastha* and so was devoted to religious study, he went when he was requested once more in the name of Mr. William Bentinck. When these two men, both so noble, met, Lord Bentinck consulted him as to the

advisability of its total abolition, and he must have been surprised to find that Ram Mohan Roy was against such abolition by coercion. Ram Mohan gave his opinion that such action on the part of the Government will be misconstrued and that "the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police." However he was asked to submit his views on it in a written form, which he did proving from the sacred Scriptures of the Hindus that the custom was not one enjoined by the Hindu religion. Taking this pronouncement of such a great religious teacher as Ram Mohan Roy for its guide, the Government headed by Bentinck, who was undeterred by the counsel of Ram Mohan not to put down the custom by force, passed in 1829 the Regulation forbidding its practice altogether declaring it illegal and criminal. It was thus that this custom, one of the most cruel that was ever practised by such a humane people as the Hindus, came to an end. Undoubtedly there were protests and petitions from orthodox Hindus and the matter even went to the King in Council in England, but happily nothing came of it and this blot on Hindu humanity and civilization was erased for ever.

An indirect result of this agitation for abolition and counter-agitation was the starting of a Society called the Dharma Sabha in antagonism to the Brahma Sabha of Ram Mohan Roy at about the time when it was started *i. e.* 1828. This Dharma Sabha was meant to defend the Hindu religion as well as the "excellent customs and usages" of the Hindu people from such innovations and reforms as were being introduced by

such men as Ram Mohan Roy and his friends. Though the Society was started with a great deal of enthusiasm, it does not seem to have prospered, for hardly anything of it has been heard since, but it has this merit viz. it is the first of all those movements that have sprung up since, for the defence of orthodoxy in opposition to the reformers.

Besides these social, educational and journalistic activities, Ram Mohan was busy with the cause of the political progress of the country as well. For years he had been studying the political conditions and the methods of constitutional government in European countries, and had thrown himself whole-heartedly into the cause of democratic reform not only in India but all over the world. Wherever the cause of representative government would triumph it was a personal triumph for him and he rejoiced thereby as much as the people who gained directly by it. Future generations of Indians will always rejoice in the thought that this great man was a great lover of freedom, whether political, social or religious. Mr. Adam, the Unitarian missionary, who knew him very intimately, says with regard to him that "Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul, freedom not of action merely, but of thought." This passion of his for freedom was so great that when the Neopolitans were robbed of their constitution by their king, Ram Mohan wrote to a friend these words:—"From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now

enjoy. Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neopolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful." When the people of Spain got a constitution Ram Mohan was so pleased with the news that he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall of Calcutta, an action the like of which has not been repeated again during the last hundred years in India in spite of all the political progress that has been made in the country. When in the year 1830 there was a Revolution in France, Ram Mohan was very enthusiastic about it and looked upon it as a triumph of liberty. On his way to England he met with a serious accident at the Cape of Good Hope, and yet when he learnt that there were two French frigates flying the flag of the Revolution in the neighbourhood, he went to visit them in spite of doctor's advice. While in England, he sided enthusiastically with the Liberals in their efforts to pass the great Reform Bill of the year 1830, and he even went to the length of telling the people there that in case the Bill failed to pass, he would give up all connection with the British Government.

His political activities in India were manifold. He was trying long since to develop the political consciousness of his people by his papers, and whenever any particular problem affecting the interests of the people arose Ram Mohan was the first to draw the attention of both the people and the Government to it, appealing to the latter by various means to redress the grievance in accordance with the lofty principles of liberty which were cherished so deeply by the British people. How he worked to secure the



freedom of the Press has been already noticed. Again when a new Jury Act was passed by the Government in 1827, an Act wherein were introduced "religious distinctions into the judicial system of the country," so that "any natives, Hindu or Mohammedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, either European or Native, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Musalman Juror, however high he may stand in the estimation of society" and which Act also denied "to Hindus and Mohammedans the honour of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Musalmans", he was the first to protest against it, and sent petitions for presentation to both the Houses of Parliament signed by many leading Hindus and Mohammedans. In connection with this question, among other things he wrote a passage which is quite prophetic of the condition of India as it is to-day. It stands thus:—

"Supposing that some 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing

every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British Empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy."

"In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge."

How wise are these words and what lessons do they not convey to the rulers of the country even to-day at the distance of a hundred years? His English biographer truly says:—"There is here in germ the national aspiration which is now breaking forth into cries for 'representation of India in the Imperial Parliament', 'Home Rule for India,' and even 'India for the Indians'. The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Ram Mohan's mind; and he did, however vaguely, claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves. Here again Ram Mohan stands forth as the tribune and prophet of the new India."

However, the nationalism for which he stood a century back, though anticipating all that is happening to-day in India, was of no narrow type, and he fully believed in the good and great effects of the mutual good understanding between Englishmen and Indians. He says with regard to it:—

“From personal experience, I am impressed with the conviction that the greater our intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs.”

Ram Mohan Roy was even in favour of the settlement of Europeans in India who, he thought, would infuse new energy into the country and would protect the peasants from being “victims to the whims of zemindars and great banias,” by employing them in their plantations etc. He was always anxious to improve the condition of the agricultural people of India, and would have even welcomed a sprinkling of model landlords of upper classes only from England. He appealed in various ways to the Government to make the position of the rack-rented ryot better and to alleviate “the present miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India,” whose rents were already “raised to a ruinous extent,” by the zemindars, who had already been benefited a great deal by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. He urged upon the Government to give the cultivators a permanent interest in the soil, so that not only their condition might be improved but that they might be a power in the land on which the Government could safely rely in times of danger, averting thus “the necessity of keeping on foot an immense standing army at an enormous cost.”. He

wrote several pamphlets concerning questions such as European Settlement in India, the Judicial and Revenue Systems in India, etc. In all these he stood for lofty and noble ideals of liberty, national well-being and international unity. Thus in all his political, educational and social activities he looked forward to India being a great country in which both Indians and Englishmen might live in peace and concord and bring it to the level of European countries, making it a kind of United States of Asia which, being westernized to a certain extent in all things, might enlighten in course of time the whole of the vast continent of Asia.

## CHAPTER XII

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRAHMA SABHA.

Meanwhile, amid all these manifold activities of his the work that was dearest to his heart *viz.*, the religious reformation of his country, was being carried on with as much energy as ever. He was occupying a unique position before his countrymen, a position which it has fallen to the lot of few to occupy since. In one sense he was neither a Hindu nor a Christian, and yet in another sense he was both. His religious position at this time has been excellently summarized by Mr. Adam in a letter to one Mr. Tuckerman that he wrote in 1826 as follows :—

“Mr. Tuppin in one of his letters asks, Does Ram Mohan profess to be a Christian?..... I find it difficult to give a definite answer to this question, but the nearest approach to the truth, although I hope and believe that it is not the truth itself, would perhaps be to say that he is both a Christian and a Hindu, Christian with Christians and a Hindu with Hindus. And before you say either that I am contradicting myself, or that he is insincere in his religion, you must candidly weigh all the circumstances in which he is placed. In the first place then, his relinquishment of idolatry is absolute, total, public, uncompromising: and when you reflect who he is and what he is, this is of itself an invincible test of integrity of religious principle and conduct. But his relinquishment of idolatry is not inconsistent with the retention of his Brahmanical

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rights, and observances of the rules of caste, the latter of which is necessary to the former and both are necessary to enable him to be useful to his countrymen,—the thing which he has most at heart. On the other hand, although he may safely relinquish idolatry, he cannot safely profess Christianity. The profession would involve loss of caste, loss of property, loss of influence, loss of everything but a name: and while he employs caste, property, influence and everything to promote, not the nominal profession merely, but the enlightened belief and salutary influences of Christianity, his claim to be a practical although not a nominal Christian would seem to be undoubted. In this point of view, Hinduism furnishes the antidote to its own inherent intolerance. There is another reason for the course he has pursued. The profession of Christianity would identify him in the opinion of Hindus not with the respectable and liberal portion of the Christian population, but with the low, ignorant and depraved converts recently made by the English or long since made by the Portuguese missionaries,—and in the opinion of Mussalmans who hold him in high esteem, with Trinitarians generally, for such Mussalmans suppose all Christians to be. In other words, the profession of Christianity would inevitably, in the present circumstances of this country, identify him with persons from whom he differs as widely as from those with whom he is now identified. He has, therefore, only a choice of evils, and he hitherto chosen that which, although he

under its bondage, leaves him greater liberty and usefulness than he could otherwise possess. I have given you the view of his circumstances and conduct which I have reason to suppose he would himself give you if he were now writing to you: and I have only further to add that.....I do *not* feel these reasons to be quite so convincing as they appear to him.....I have no doubt that in his opinion they possess all the force necessary fully to justify him in the sight of God and his own conscience in the course which he has pursued. Since writing the preceding paragraph, I have had an opportunity of showing it to Ram Mohan Roy, who considers it a correct representation of his feelings and sentiments."

This was the religious position of Ram Mohan Roy as it affected his person, and it has been described very correctly. Added to this there was what may be called the national aspect of it, which has been treated elsewhere in this book in connection with the proselytizing propaganda of the Christian missionaries. Thus both from the personal as well as the national standpoint, Ram Mohan had before him "only a choice of evils," and though he groaned "under its bondage," he chose that which he considered "in the sight of God and his own conscience" to be the lesser evil. He had to steer his ship between the Scylla of Hindu idolatry and polytheism with all their concomitant evils, and the Charybdis of European proselytism with purse, prestige and power behind it. It was indeed one of the most delicate situations in which a religious man and much more a teacher, who has to think of not only himself but

of others whose numbers perhaps may be millions, could be put, and the way in which he handled it shows a most remarkable insight into spiritual truth as well as human nature. Only a man endowed with the rarest gifts with which a religious teacher can be blessed could work in the way he did, and from the way in which the work that he left has prospered, it is but right to say that the hand of Providence was behind it. For it was in the very movement which he left as the ripest fruit of his life and work, *viz.*, the Brahma Samaj, that there arose a man of Keshub Chunder Sen's type, who, by the sheer force of his spiritual genius not only steered the ship between those two rocks much further than before, but taking them by the horns as if it were, almost carried it safely to the other side.

But not to anticipate, so far as these years 1825-26 are concerned, we find Ram Mohan Roy closely identified with the Unitarian Mission. However it must be said that he did not agree with the Unitarians in all things, a fact which must not be lost sight of in any fair estimate that may be made of his motives and work. Although he agreed with them in most of the fundamentals of their faith, he differed from them inasmuch as he had decidedly a more catholic attitude towards the various religions of the world. His love for the Hindu Religion, particularly what he called the Vedant, and what he did for its spread, has been already noticed. Besides, he at about this time planned to write a life of Mohammed, the founder of the Moslem faith for which he had always a partiality, but unfortunately he could not do it owing to his many preoccupations. In these and various



other ways this catholic side of his character manifested itself, and it is quite likely that it did not appeal to his Unitarian friends.

Another thing in which he perhaps differed from them was in regard to the question of caste. While the Unitarians may have looked upon it more in the light of a religious question, Ram Mohan did regard it as a civil one. In a private letter that he wrote in the year 1828, he says :—

“I agree with you that in point of vices the Hindus are not worse than the generality of Christians in Europe or America, but I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise.....It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort. I fully agree with you that there is nothing so sublime as the precepts taught by Christ, and there is nothing equal to the simple doctrines he inculcated.”

As for the Unitarian Mission that had been started some years since Ram Mohan Roy was doing his best to co-operate with Mr. Adam in order to make it a success. They were raising funds for it both in India and elsewhere, and the Unitarian friends in England had sent to them Rs. 15,000. They started their divine

service again in the year 1827 after giving it up for some time, and they wanted even to erect a chapel for such Unitarian worship. Ram Mohan Roy even wrote a small tract, though not in his own name, wherein he gave the reasons why he *i. e.*, a Hindoo, attended the Unitarian worship. He said that the chief of these reasons was that in such worship there was pure rational adoration of God the Maker and the Ruler of the Universe, and that in it there was no such element as belief in Incarnation or Trinity, which things were dinned into his ears by the Hindus as well as the orthodox Christians. Mr. Adam tried various means to attract people of all classes, literate as well as illiterate, but to no purpose. Somehow or other the work of this Mission could not make any progress. Even the services were very poorly attended, and many times the members of the Managing Committee itself failed to put in their appearance. Ultimately Mr. Adam had to give up all attempts at mission-work, the divine service was stopped and he "retired heart-broken."

But before Mr. Adam retired, he had endeavoured to form the Indian members of the Unitarian Association whom he calls Hindu Unitarians into some sort of a permanent Association "for the establishment of the public worship of the One God among themselves, for the printing of tracts and for the diffusion of religious knowledge generally among their countrymen," as he wrote to Mr. John Bowring, London, in 1828. He says further in the same letter that "to prevent prejudice from being excited, it will be necessary to keep Christianity out of view at present in connection with this auxiliary, but it will really

be (what it perhaps may not be nominally) an auxiliary to our views, and a highly valuable one, too, if I can succeed in creating the necessary degree of interest to begin and carry it on." In 1829, he announces to Dr. Tuckerman that "there has accordingly been formed a Hindu Unitarian Association, the object of which is, however, strictly Hindu and not Christian, *i. e.*, to teach and practise the worship of the one only God on the basis of the divine authority of the Ved, and not of the Christian scriptures. This is a basis of which I have distinctly informed Ram Mohan and my other native friends that I cannot approve." The Hindu Unitarian Association spoken of here is the Brahma Sabha which was started in the year 1828. One can find from these letters quoted here that Mr. Adam had a hand in founding the Brahma Samaj, at least in giving birth to the idea thereof, though he did not like its basis to be Ved as he himself says.

This is one account of the birth of the Brahma Samaj, well-authenticated by letters of Mr. Adam himself. Another account, which is by no means contradictory to this, says that the idea originated from among the disciples of Ram Mohan. One of these, while returning from the place of worship where Mr. Adam officiated as the minister said to Ram Mohan, "What need is there for us to go to the prayer-house of strangers to perform our worship? We ought to erect a house of our own in which to worship One God." This idea was gradually taken up and the result was the establishment of the Brahma Samaj.

Whoever may have been the first to suggest such an idea, or whether such an idea may have

come to both Mr. Adam and to the disciple of Ram Mohan independently of each other, there is not the least doubt that Ram Mohan Roy had created round about him an atmosphere of thought in which Unitarianism, whether Christian or Hindu or both simultaneously, had been the watchword of his party for over a decade past, and all such ideas were bound to rise therein. Years since he had, by his translations and publications of the Upnishads and by his various tracts, tried to spread Hindu Theism or Hindu Unitarianism among his countrymen, and he had already gathered round him a band of disciples. All these years he had carried on several controversies with Hindus of various schools of thought in his own language and thus also had spread his monotheistic views far and wide. He had started various Societies also, such as the Atmiya Sabha in which he and his friends discussed questions concerning the ultimate destiny of the soul, the existence of God, etc., from the Hindu and more particularly the Vedantic point of view. His own researches in the Vedant for nearly a generation past had made him find therein a body of truth which he regarded as sufficient for the guidance of his countrymen and he had tried his best to put it within their reach in as easy a manner as possible. This leaven was already working in the minds of people. Later on when he found what he considered to be a more perfect form of Religion in the Teaching of Jesus Christ, he put that too before his people in his Precepts of Jesus and in various other ways. But in these excellent and praiseworthy efforts of his he was thwarted the most by those who should have given

him the greatest help viz, the Christian missionaries themselves. The prejudice created against him in the minds of orthodox Christians was not little, for even so sane and saintly a man as Bishop Heber wrote in 1823 to a friend of his in England:—"Our chief hindrances are some Deistical Brahmins who have left their old religion and desire to found a sect of their own, and some of those who are professionally engaged in the same work with ourselves the Dissenters." The Anglican Bishop thus classed Ram Mohan with the Dissenters who were heretics in his eyes, and the Dissenters among whom the Baptist missionaries were the chief looked upon Ram Mohan as a "heathen" and as an "injurer of the truth".

However, he, heedless of these prejudices and opposition, carried on his work in favour of Unitarian Christianity, and he spent not only a good deal of money for it, but was even prepared to leave all his property to the Unitarian Mission in case he had no male heir, a fact which we learn from a letter of Mr. Adam. But in these efforts of his he met with deep disappointment, and that was largely due to the attitude taken up by the missionaries and orthodox Christians. In Unitarian Christianity such as he found it in the Precepts of Jesus, both moral and religious, he found that universal religion which the whole world was in need of, and which alone would unite the various castes and communities of this country as well as the peoples and nations of the whole world. He had again and again given expression to this faith of his, but was met with only strong opposition and argument and even abuse from those who should have been the first to understand

and welcome him as the most powerful ally that Providence had raised for them. In addition to this he found in the proselytism carried on by the missionaries not only a menace to the civilization and religions of India but a complete perversion of the Religion of Jesus as he conceived it. Hence it would not be unnatural if he came to consider any countenancing of Christianity even of the Unitarian stamp, a sort of direct or indirect help given to the proselytizing propaganda. But we are not sure if he ever came to look upon it that way. Rather he still persisted in preaching Unitarianism but it was all to no effect. In course of time even Mr. Adam began to think that "it will be necessary to keep Christianity out of view at present."

Meanwhile the Hindu Unitarianism had not altogether receded into the back ground. While conducting his controversy with the missionaries through the Brahmanical Magazine, he had brought it forward against them as the purer side of the Hindu religion. He had started what was called the Vedant College where along with other subjects of practical importance, Sanscrit philosophy and more particularly the Vedant philosophy was taught as an offset to the more exclusively practical character of the education for which he had stood before the Government. Besides he wrote two tracts called 'Different modes of Worship' and 'The Gayatri, the most sacred text of the Vedas' in the years 1825 and 1826 respectively. In the first he tried to show that there have been recognized by Hindu sages such as Vyas etc., whose authority has been unimpeachable, two classes of worshippers, one through forms and the other through

spirit, just as in the Bible the Jews are represented in the Old Testament as worshipping in a particular place which has been held sacred, while in the Christian dispensation Christ's followers are asked to worship God not in this place or that, but in spirit and in truth. In the second he explains at length the meaning of the Gayatri which, he says on the title page, is "esteemed by those who believe in the revelation of the Veds as most appropriate to the nature of Supreme Being." In this way, whenever an occasion arose, Ram Mohan Roy was ready to defend what he called "Hindu Theism" or Hindu Unitarianism, and put its claims before the notice of his countrymen as well as foreigners. But much of this work excepting the last tract he had done during the latter period under the name of some body else. All this work required to be done, but he perhaps felt it inconsistent with his open profession of Unitarianism. Whatever the reasons for this particular course of conduct be, and they are known to Heaven alone, there is no doubt that Ram Mohan Roy had not given up Hindu Theism altogether nor was there any need for him to do this, though between that and Unitarian Christianity he decidedly preferred the latter as the purer and fuller form of Religion. But unfortunately his choice was not confined to these two only. There were other circumstances which most materially affected the whole question and which could not be left out of consideration. Even Mr. Adam himself felt the force of all of them. On the top of these came the utter failure of the Unitarian Mission. Unitarianism came as a foreign religion, and moreover it was easily confounded by the Hindus with Christianity, the

religion of the conquerors, and hence they would have nothing to do with it. Mr. Adam was the first to suggest a falling back upon what was more general or ethnic. Also similar suggestions came from Ram Mohan's own disciples. He himself may be looking forward to some such thing. Thus the idea of a Hindu Unitarian Association gradually arose not in this mind or that but in all of them, through sheer psychological and national necessity as it were, and in consequence there was established the Brahma Samaj, the first religious movement of Modern India, on the 20th of August 1828.

It was called at first the Brahma Sabha, meaning an Association of the Worshippers of Brahma. Its membership was open to every one of whatever caste, colour or creed, though the ministry was confined to the Brahmins only. The object of the Sabha was only spiritual worship of One God, to offer which it met once every week, the day chosen for such worship at first being Saturday. The way in which this worship was offered has been thus described by Mr. Adam:—

“The service begins with two or three of the Pandits singing, or rather *chanting* in the cathedral style, some of the spiritual portions of the Ved, which are next explained in the vernacular dialect to the people by another Pandit. This is followed by a discourse in Bengali.....and the whole is concluded by hymns both in Sanscrit and Bengali, sung with the voice and accompanied by instrumental music, which is also occasionally interposed between other parts of the service. The audience consists generally of from 50 to 60 individuals, several Pandits, a good many



Brahmins, and all decent and attentive in their demeanor."

The service that is thus described may have been an adaptation to a certain extent of the Unitarian service with some changes here and there and the Veds taking the place of the Bible. Possibly it is the same order that is followed at present now in the Adi Brahma Samaj, the only branch of the Brahma Samaj which has kept up some of the traditions of this Brahma Sabha, a fact which its very name, given to it by Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore when Keshub with the band of progressive Brahmas separated from him in the year 1866, signifies. The other branches of the Brahma Samaj, such as the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj have altered the form a little, introducing more of the vernacular and extempore element instead of the Samskrit *mantras* and readings.

As for the basis of the Brahma Sabha which was now established, it was the Veds, the same that has been recognized by every sect of the Hindus. In Ram Mohan's own time the question was asked, and it has been asked more than once since, whether it was right for Ram Mohan Roy to do this, particularly as he did not believe in the infallibility of the Veds and had acknowledged the superiority of the Christian Scriptures to them in his other writings. Perhaps the only answer to this question may be found in this, that Ram Mohan Roy had to make in this matter too a choice between two evils and he chose the lesser one. As has been already said, the Christian Scriptures were out of question. Failing them, his choice was limited to the two alternatives of making his movement either a

purely deistic one based on natural reason, or a theistic one by the very fact of its being based on some Scripture or Revelation. If it had been of the first kind, it would have degenerated soon into a sort of philosophical club, and would never have become the great religious movement that it came to be. Moreover, Ram Mohan Roy, although he never believed in the verbal infallibility of any Scripture, whether it be the Ved or the Bible, had now come to know the value of Scripture too well to discard it altogether and to install mere reason in its place. It is true Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore some years after declared the Veds to be fallible and removed them from the basic position that had been given to them by Ram Mohan Roy, but perhaps he took a too narrow view of the meaning of Revelation or Scripture, and when in order to supply their place he made a selection of a number of verses from the Upnishads giving them the name "Brahma Dharma" he gave the movement a turn which would have very likely cut short its life, had it not been for the great genius of Keshub Chunder Sen who, from the very beginning of his independent career, made the movement an eclectic one by selecting verses from the various Scriptures of the world and putting that selection under the name of Sloka-Sangraha before the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj as its religious guide. Even this was fragmentary, and in the last phase of his life, *viz.*, the New Dispensation period, Keshub came to recognize a sort of unity in all the Scriptures of the world, a view which was a logical development of Ram Mohan Roy's position with regard to the religions of the world, not as it appears in the establishment of this Brahma Sabha which was a

particular adaptation for particular ends, but as it does in the general tenor of his life and teachings. Thus Ram Mohan Roy had to choose between Deism and what he called Hindu Theism, and it was indeed very wise of him to have chosen the latter.

However, if Ram Mohan Roy was justified in his choice of the Veds as the basis of the Brahma Sabha, perhaps he was not to the same extent in his confining the ministry of the Sabha to the Brahmins only. In this also the progressive nature of the Brahma Samaj has asserted itself, particularly under the leadership of Keshub Chunder Sen, and the ministry has been thrown open to all. It is not that Ram Mohan Roy did not respect genuine worth wherever it was found. He was too modern for such conservatism and pride of caste, and moreover he had known by his study, observation and comparison with other peoples such as Mohammedans and Europeans the evil results of the caste-system to which he largely attributed the political dependence of the country for centuries past. His own mode of life was a happy blend of Hindu and Moslem style with a touch of Europeanism, and in eating and drinking he was not particular with regard to the keeping of the restrictions of the caste-system. But although he may have groaned and did groan under its weight, he was very particularly careful to maintain his position in the caste-system. On that depended his religious work, his other activities and the "security of his property" too, as he wrote to his friends in England giving them his instructions concerning his funeral. Moreover, it may be said in his defence that if there is any thing such as fulness of time in such matters, that was

certainly wanting in those days and that it required a generation or almost half a century and a Keshub to give that blow to the caste-system which it received in the Brahma Samaj. It is then no wonder if Ram Mohan hesitated to meddle with the *Varnashram* system in any direct way, and if he confined the ministry of his Sabha to the Brahmins only, though it was decidedly much more of a compromise than his having the Veds as the basis of the Brahma Samaj. Possibly he may have thought it too much of an innovation to allow any but a Brahmin to read and expound the Veds which were regarded as the sole monopoly of that priestly caste, though he allowed even those who were considered Sudras and Malechhas to attend such recital of the Sacred Ved, an act which was forbidden them all these centuries. He was pouring new wine into old bottles for the moment, and perhaps in his heart of hearts may have looked for a day when all such unnatural restrictions would vanish as they had done in the West through the Reformation brought about by Luther, and the innate worth of Man as Man would be recognized by all.

It would be of great interest to know whether Ram Mohan Roy by his founding the Brahma Sabha meant to give a new religion to India under the name of "Brahma Dharma" as it came to be evolved by his successor Devendra Nath Tagore, or under that of the "New Dispensation" which was a later evolution under the lead of Keshub Chunder Sen: also whether Ram Mohan ever meant the Brahma Sabha to be a socio-religious community that it came to be in course of time. According to the present writer and to many others, Ram Mohan Roy may not have foreseen these developments of his own work, though one

may well think that he would have welcomed them, in spite of the fact that they were in a sense departures from the lines laid down by him. Though his own work, so far as the establishment of this Sabha is concerned, was more of a Revivalist and Reformer than of a new Teacher, he was, by his life-long search of and fidelity to truth and by his laying the foundation of spiritual worship of One God, sowing a seed of mighty potentialities which could not but grow and fructify in the way it did. It was this priceless treasure of the spiritual worship which he was leaving to his countrymen as a legacy, and thereby he was opening the doors of spiritual liberty wider than they had been opened before. This new spiritual freedom was the privilege of pure and spiritual Vedic worship granted to men of every caste and creed and colour, a privilege that was hitherto kept back from them, although a number of back-doors had been opened in what may be called the Pauranic period when the Puranas were made to supply the place of the Veds so far as the generality of people were concerned. He was adding a new class of people, viz., *Grihastas* to "the ten classes of Sannyasis" who, he had said in a tract of his, were the only persons besides the followers of Nanak, Kabir and Dadu, who believed in the Unity of Godhead and worshipped Him spiritually. This was indeed a great step for him to take, and in it lay involved a number of the other steps that were taken by his successors.

The Sabha soon made some progress, the people becoming more interested in it as they took it to be an indigenous affair, a Swadeshi Society. The attendance at the divine services became larger and

even funds were forthcoming for the spread of its work. All this made Ram Mohan Roy and his companions think of securing a permanent place of their own where they might worship, a sort of Brahma-Mandir, though perhaps it was not called by that dignified name then, the idea of Mandir or Temple being too much associated with idolatry to allow them to make use of it without being misunderstood. A site on Chitpore Road was secured, and a modest building called a "brick-built messuage" was erected thereupon. This property, along with a substantial sum of money, was put into the hands of a body of Trustees. The Trust Deed that was then made is indeed a document of rare worth, showing what a lofty ideal Ram Mohan Roy set forth before all those who would follow in his footsteps perhaps for ages. In short it contains the creed of the Brahma Samaj as he left it, and in it is summed up the meaning and the secret of his life-work. The following are some of the chief instructions with regard to the use of the building :—

" That they (*i. e.* trustees).....shall and do from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter permit and suffer the said messuage or building, land, tenements, to be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied, appropriated, as and for a place of public meeting, of all sorts and descriptions of people, without distinction, as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner : for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any other name

designation or title, peculiarly used for, and applied to, any particular Being, or Beings, by any man, or set of men, whatsoever :

“and that no graven image, statue or scripture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of any being, shall be admitted within the message, building, land etc. and that no sacrifice, offering, or oblation of any kind or thing, shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said message.....be deprived of life, either for religious purposes or for food :

“and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary, by any accident, for the preservation of life), feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon :

“and that, in conducting the said worship or adoration, no object animate or inanimate, that has been, or is, or shall hereafter become, or be recognized, as an object of worship, by any man, or set of men, shall be reviled, or slightly or contemptuously spoken of, or alluded to, either in preaching, praying, or in the hymns, or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said message or building :

“and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship, but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue, and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds :

"and also, that a person of good repute, and well-known for his knowledge, piety and morality, be employed by the said trustees.....as a resident superintendent, and for the purpose of superintending the worship so to be performed, as in hereinbefore stated and expressed: and that such worship be performed daily, or at least as often as once in seven days."

It is worth noting that there is no mention in this creed of the Vedic basis or the Brahmin ministry, and that it is as universal as it could well be under the circumstances at that time. It is said that Ram Mohan Roy, while speaking of what he called Universal Religion used to be "so much moved that tears came out from his eyes." Moreover he had written a tract in the year 1829 bearing the name "The Universal Religion," in which he had gathered together from the Hindu Scriptures a few "religious instructions, founded on sacred authorities," a tract which was a kind of catechism of this Universal Religion. It was of this Universal Religion or Theism that he gave the outline in this Trust-Deed, an outline which for its catholic comprehensiveness and iconoclastic puritanism is unique in the history of Religion. Short of belief in the Incarnation on one side, and of Agnosticism and Atheism on the other, it contained within itself room for all the developments of the Brahma Samaj of later days, including even the last phase of the life of Keshub Chunder Sen in which he gave flesh and blood as it were to the bare skeleton thus left by Ram Mohan Roy and made it a living reality, and in which this creed found its logical



development in the one left by Keshub in his Nava Samhita.

This building was formally opened with an imposing ceremony attended by a large number of influential people on the 23rd of January 1830, a day which has been since observed as the principal day of the Brahma Samaj. Very soon after Ram Mohan was to leave this institution, which was the ripe fruit of his maturest experience, but it was in the hands of Providence, and under Its guidance it came to fulfill more than the most sanguine expectations that may have been formed by its founder and father.

## CHAPTER XIII

### VISIT TO EUROPE.

Ram Mohan Roy had conceived long since a genuine admiration for European countries, especially so far as their advancement in arts and sciences, and their political institutions, the watchword of which was Liberty, were concerned, and therefore as has been mentioned before in connection with his letter to Mr. Digby he was looking forward to his going to Europe some day, provided some suitable opportunity offered itself. Indeed there were great difficulties in such an undertaking in those days when to cross the *Kala Pani*, the Black Waters as the sea was called, was considered an act of offence against the received doctrines of the Hindu religion, and when such an act was full of risks and perils great and unknown and therefore almost forbidding to the timid and conservative Hindu of that time. But Ram Mohan Roy was not to be deterred by these fears or popular prejudices, and as soon as he found his opportunity he took it. Not only was he one of the first among Indians to go as far as Europe, but when it is remembered that when he left India he was fifty-six years old, an age when even in these days of easy and quick travelling many would find it very hard to leave their country for Europe or America, the true significance of the enterprise which required several months of voyage and that too to a country unknown and very distant will be realized.

One of the immediate objects he had in view in going there was to represent the cause of the Mogul Emperor of Delhi before the British King, as the Emperor felt that he was not properly treated by the

East India Company which had the virtual possession of the Mogul Empire. For this purpose the Mogul Emperor conferred on him the title of Rajah and appointed him his Envoy to the British King. Although neither his title of Rajah nor his position as an Envoy was recognized by the then Indian Government, he was none the less desirous of helping the Mogul Emperor in his difficulties and he even wrote to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, with whom he had co-operated so heartily in the matter of the abolition of Sutteeism in a farewell letter as follows :—

“ Having at length surmounted all the obstacles of a domestic nature that have hitherto opposed my long-cherished intention of visiting England, I am now resolved to proceed to that land of liberty by one of the vessels that will sail in November, and from a due regard to the purport of the late Mr. Secretary Stirling’s letter of 15th January last, and other considerations, I have determined not to appear there as the Envoy of His Majesty Akbar the Second, but as a private individual. I am satisfied that in thus divesting myself of all public character, my zealous services in behalf of His Majesty need not be abated. I even trust that their chance of success may be improved by being thus exempted from all jealousy of a political nature to which they might by misapprehension be subjected.”

Writing about him and his intended visit to England, one Mr. Young who was then in India wrote to Jeremy Bentham, the great philosopher of England, as follows :—

“ If I were beside you, and could explain matters fully, you would comprehend the greatness of the undertaking—his going on board ship

to a foreign and distant land, a thing hitherto not to be named among Hindoos, and least of all among Brahmins. His grand object, besides the natural one of satisfying his own laudable spirit of inquiry, has been to set a laudable example to his benighted countrymen: and every one of the slow and gradual moves that he has made preparatory to his actually quitting India, has been marked by the same discretion of judgment..... The good which this excellent and extraordinary man has already effected by his writings and example cannot be told. But for his exertions Suttée would be in full vigour at the present day, and the influence of the priesthood in all its ancient force:...He is one of the most modest men I have ever met with. It is no small compliment to such a man that even a Governor-General like the present, who, though a man of the most honest intentions, suspects everyone and trusts nobody, and who knows that R. M. R. greatly disapproves of many of the acts of the Government, should have shown him so much respect as to furnish him with introductions to friends of rank and political influence in England."

There is an epoch-making significance in such a man's going to Europe. In him the best of the West saw the best of the East, and there began then that understanding between the East and the West, which, though clouded again and again by the dust raised by the clash of political and commercial interests, has grown from more to more and may ripen one day into that union, the thought of which is cherished so deeply by the most thoughtful and devout people in both

Europe and Asia. As for the place and significance of this visit in the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy himself, in the life of his country and that of the British Empire, it is thus that his English biographer speaks of it:—

“ Ram Mohan's three years in West form the crown and consummation of his life-work.....They supply the dramatic culmination of Ram Mohan's half century of service to his country and his kind. The epoch they mark in Hindu development only confirms and extends his religious record. He was the first Brahman to cross the ocean. He was the first Hindu of eminence who dared to break the spell which for ages the sea had laid on India. He set a conspicuous precedent to the host of educated Hindus who have since studied and travelled in Europe. The consequences for his countrymen are such as to make this act alone sufficient to secure for its author a lasting distinction. Its Imperial importance is not less striking. Ram Mohan Roy's presence in this country made the English people aware, as they had never been before, of the dignity, the culture, and the piety of the race they had conquered in the East. India became incarnate in him, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. In the court of the King, in the halls of the legislature, in the select coteries of fashion, in the society of philosophers and men of letters, in Anglican Church and Non-Conformist meeting-house, in the privacy of many a home, and before the wondering crowds of Lancashire operatives, Ram Mohan stood forth the visible and personal embodiment of our Eastern Empire.....

As he had represented England to India, so now he interpreted India to England."

Max Muller wrote many years after of this visit as follows:—

" But for the sake of intellectual intercourse, for the sake of comparing notes, so to say, with his Aryan brothers, Ram Mohan Roy was the first who came from East to West, the first to join hands and to complete that world-wide circle through which henceforth, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West, and Western thought return to the East, making us feel once more that ancient brotherhood which unites the whole Aryan race, inspiring us with new hopes for a common faith, purer and simpler than any of the ecclesiastical religions of the world, and invigorating us for acts of nobler daring in the conquest of truth than any that are inscribed in the chronicles of our divided past."

Ram Mohan Roy left India for England on the 19th of November 1830, little knowing that he would live only three years more and no more return to his beloved land and give it the benefit of his enlarged experience. Besides the one object mentioned above, *viz*, to plead the cause of the Mogul Emperor before the British King, he had other things to do in England, the chief of them being to put before the British people and Parliament the cause of his country and to work for the better Government thereof in all departments. He had to plead the cause of the poor Suttee also before the British public against the orthodox people of India who had sent a petition to England to remove from the statute-book the new law for its

abolition made by Lord William Bentinck. In addition to this political, social as well as philanthropic mission of his own, he was very eager to take part in the cause of popular freedom in England, his visit to Europe taking place just when the great Reform Bill of the year 1833 was being discussed and England was in the midst of a great excitement. His enthusiasm for liberty was as great as ever, and while in Calcutta when the news of the French Revolution of 1830 came Ram Mohan Roy was so full of "enthusiasm that he could think and talk of nothing else." On his way to England, although at the Cape he had been seriously injured by an accident, he insisted on going to see two French frigates flying the revolutionary flag, the tricolour, at Table Bay. On the way further off they learnt that there was a change in the Ministry in England which foreboded good for the cause of liberty, and at the news Ram Mohan was extremely glad. So great were his enthusiasm and excitement at such times, that some of his friends were even afraid lest his health might suffer therefrom.

Ram Mohan Roy reached England landing at Liverpool on April 8th, 1831, taking thus nearly six months for the voyage. As soon as it was known that the distinguished visitor, whose fame had preceded him, was there, numbers of people flocked to visit him, with some of whom he had animated discussions on political and theological subjects. One of the eminent men he saw there was William Roscoe, the historian, who was some time since corresponding with him, both of them having published independently of each other a similar collection of the moral teachings of Jesus Christ. After exchanging their salutations

Ram Mohan Roy said " Happy and proud am I—proud and happy to behold a man whose fame has extended not only over Europe, but over every part of the world". Mr. Roscoe, who was seriously ill then and died only a few weeks after, said "I bless God that I have been permitted to live to see this day."

From Liverpool he proceeded to London, being anxious to be present in the House of Commons to witness the second reading of the Reform Bill. On his way at Manchester he had a great welcome from the mill-operatives, all of whom struck work and turned out to see "the King of Ingee" as they called him. On his reaching London, although it was very late at night, still "long after he had retired to rest, the venerable Bentham, who had not for many years called on any one or left his house—found his way to the hotel, and left a characteristic note for him." This was a good earnest of what was to come in the following days and months and so great was the rush of visitors soon after his reaching London that Ram Mohan's discussions with them made him ill and the doctors had to forbid his seeing any one for some time.

The Unitarians, who had known him long since through his writings and with whose leaders he had been in correspondence for many years, were full of rejoicing to have found him whom they looked upon as one of their own among them. Soon after he was in London a meeting was held by the Unitarian Association to welcome him. At this welcome-meeting Dr. Bowring said among other things that he was as glad to meet and welcome Ram Mohan Roy as he would have been if a Plato or a Socrates had come



from the dead, and further compared his visit to Europe to that of Peter the Great of Russia to the South of Europe, saying at the same time that Ram Mohan's visit involved a greater courage and at the same time was of much greater significance for India as well as the whole of the East. He said the following among other things :—

“It was to us a delightful dream that we might on some occasion, welcome him here but though it was a hope, it was but a trembling one of which we scarcely dared to anticipate the fruition. But its accomplishment has produced recollections so interesting, that this day will be an epoch in our history, and no one will forget the occasion when the Brahmin stood among us to receive our welcome, and the assurance of the interest we take in all he does and in all he shall do; to which I may add that our delight will be too great if we can in any way advance those great plans, the progress of which is the grand object of his exertions. Sir, I move with great pleasure “that the members of this Association feel a deep interest in the amelioration of the condition of the natives of British India: that we trust their welfare and improvement will never be lost sight of by the Legislature and Government of our country: that we have especial pleasure in the hope that juster notions and purer forms of religion are gradually advancing among them and that our illustrious visitor from that distant region, the Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, be hereby certified of our sympathy in his arduous and philanthropic labours, of our admiration for his character, of

our delight in his presence among us, and of our conviction that the magnanimous and beneficent course which he has marked out for himself and hitherto consistently pursued, will entitle him to the blessings of his countrymen and of mankind as it will assuredly receive those of future generations."

But it was not the Unitarians alone with whom he came in close contact while in England. The Anglicans as well as Non-Conformists also came to be known by him intimately in course of time, and he found friends among them too. Ram Mohan Roy attended often the churches of both the Unitarians and the Anglicans, the very first Sunday he was in England being divided by his attendance at both those places of worship.

In the same way, all political parties wanted to do honour to this great Indian. Even the Tories among whom there were men of the highest rank and families were not behind in recognizing his worth, and it is said that he was "for a considerable time much more in Tory than in Whig circles" and "with Lord Brougham he was on terms of the closest and most confidential intimacy, and, in short, he was honoured and esteemed by men of the most opposite opinions." While he was thus being recognized by the people and the peers of England as the Ambassador of the people of India, and as such they were doing their best to honour him, it is gratifying to learn that even the Ministers of the Crown "recognized his embassy and his title" from the Emperor of Delhi. The East India Company, which at first would not

recognize either him or his title, was at last forced to bend a little and gave him a dinner where nearly eighty guests were present. In course of time he was presented to His Majesty by the President of the Board of Control, and he had a place assigned to him at the Coronation among the Ambassadors.

It was about this time that he was invited by the Select Committee of the House of Commons to give evidence with reference to the renewal of the Company's Charter for the consideration of which matter the committee had been appointed. Ram Mohan Roy in stead of appearing in person tendered his evidence with regard to various subjects such as the Revenue Settlement, Judicial System, etc., in the form of papers called "communications". In the first of these he appears as the champion of the rack-rented ryot, whose condition, he says, has become increasingly worse under the Zemindars who have profited much by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. He advocates a similar permanency in the cultivator's tenure of the land, which would expose him no more to the exactions of the Zemindars and give him a permanent interest in the land. In this connection he even pleads for the settlement of some landlords from England of good families who might act as models to the native Zemindars. He points out that the ryot which has an inalienable right over the soil he cultivates is sure to form the greatest bulwark of the Government which gives him this right, and thus frees it from the necessity of keeping a standing army.<sup>3</sup> He concludes his first paper on the Revenue System "with beseeching any and every authority to

devise some mode of alleviating the present miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India and thus discharge their duty to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects." In his paper on the Judicial System he advocates the system of regular appointment of native assessors in the civil courts for life, trial by jury after the model of which "the old Panchayat system may be reorganised," "since a Panchayat composed of the intelligent and respectable inhabitants, under the direction of a European judge to preserve order, and a native judge to guard against any private influence, is the only tribunal which can estimate properly the whole bearings of a case, with the validity of the documentary evidence, and the character of the witnesses, who could have little chance of imposing false testimony upon such a tribunal," and which, he adds, "is the only system by which the present abuses consisting of perjury, forgery, and corruption can be removed." He further pleads for a separation of the offices of judge and revenue commissioner and of judge and magistrate: for the codification of various laws, and several other measures such as the appointment of Indian judges in a larger number, etc. He concludes the paper thus:—

"By gradually introducing the natives into the revenue departments under the superintendence of European officers (as I proposed in my Appendix A, on the revenue system), and in the judicial department in co-operation with them, the natives may become attached to the present system of Government, so that it may become consolidated, and maintain itself by the influence of the intelligent and respectable classes of the

inhabitants and by the general goodwill of the people, and not any longer stand isolated in the midst of its subjects, supporting itself merely by the exertion of superior force.....On the contrary, should the proposed plan of combining Native with European officers have the effect of improving the condition of the inhabitants and of stimulating them with an ambition to deserve the confidence of the Government, it will then be enabled to form a judgment of the practicability and expedience of advancing natives of respectability and talent to still higher situations of trust and dignity in the state, either in conjunction with or separately from their British fellow-subjects. In conclusion, I deem it proper to state, that in preparing my replies to these queries, I have not been biassed by the opinions of any individual whatsoever nor have I consulted with any person or even referred to any work which treats on the subject of India. I have for the facts consulted only my own recollections and in regard to the opinions expressed, I have been guided only by my conscience, and by the impressions left on my mind by long experience and reflection. In the improvements which I have ventured to suggest, I have kept in view equally the interests of the governors and the governed, and without losing sight of a just regard to economy, I have been actuated by a desire to see the administration of justice in India placed on a solid and permanent foundation."

To these papers, which he published in a separate volume, he attached a sort of preface, wherein he

says the following with regard to himself among other things:—

“From occasionally directing my studies to the subjects and events peculiarly connected with Europe, and from an attentive though partial, practical observation in regard to some of them, I felt impressed with the idea, that in Europe literature was zealously encouraged and knowledge widely diffused: that mechanics were almost in a state of perfection and politics in daily progress: that moral duties were, on the whole, observed with exemplary propriety notwithstanding the temptations incident to a state of high and luxurious refinement, and that religion was spreading, even amid scepticism and false philosophy. I was in consequence continually making efforts for a series of years, to visit the Western World, with a view to satisfy myself on those subjects by personal experience. I ultimately succeeded in surmounting the obstacles to my purpose, principally of a domestic nature: and having sailed from Calcutta on the 19th of November 1830, I arrived in England on the 8th of April following. The particulars of my voyage and travels will be found in a Journal which I intend to publish together with whatever has appeared to me most worthy of remark and record in regard to the intelligence, riches and power, manners, custom, and especially the female virtue and excellence existing in this country.”

Unfortunately this Journal of which mention is made here was never published, if written at all till the end of Ram Mohan's life, and thus Modern India,

which would have liked to know very much the impressions made on the mind of this great Indian, who was the first to visit England, by the European civilization at that time, has been robbed of a great treasure indeed.

Another paper of very great importance on the subject of "Settlement in India by Europeans" was written by Ram Mohan Roy at this time, and though the views that he therein advocates may look to-day rather strange as proceeding from a man of his wisdom and foresight, it shows him looking forward to India being in the future as great as and even greater than the United States of America, a sort of United States of Asia which hand in hand with England might enlighten the whole of Asia and thereby make a real union of the East and the West possible. It is a bold dream of the great reformer, and the means he suggests to realize it are equally bold. Long since he was in favour of European settlement in India, and in a public meeting in Calcutta held for the purpose of petitioning the Parliament to throw open the China and India trade and to remove the restrictions against settlement of Europeans in India, he had said as follows:—

"From personal experience, I am impressed with the conviction that the greater our intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs, a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the condition of those of my countrymen who have enjoyed this advantage with that of those who unfortunately have not had that opportunity and a fact which I could, to the best

of my belief, declare on solemn oath before any assembly. As to the indigo planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts in Bengal and Behar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo plantations evidently better clothed and better conditioned than those who lived at a distance from such stations. There may be some partial injury done by the indigo planters but, on the whole, they have performed more good to the generality of the natives of this country than any other class of Europeans, whether in or out of the service."

Evidently the views that he held while in India have been confirmed by a little more than a year's residence in England, where he came in very close touch with what was the best and highest in English society, and as such he gives them out in this paper, mentioning both the advantages and the disadvantages of such settlement in close detail, after weighing them very carefully. The advantages he speaks of are mostly of a political and educational kind such as "superior modes of cultivating the soil and improving its products", "the introduction of many necessary improvements in the laws and judicial system", the establishment in a larger measure of "schools and other seminaries of education for the cultivation of the English language throughout the country, and for the diffusion of a knowledge of European arts and sciences", as well as the introduction of a larger amount of self-government which "would operate to continue the connection between Great Britain and India on a solid and permanent footing, provided only



the latter country be governed in a liberal manner, by means of Parliamentary superintendence and such other legislative checks in this country as may be devised and established." He says among other things the following :—

" If, however, events should occur to effect a separation between the two countries, then still the existence of a large body of respectable settlers (consisting of Europeans and their descendants, professing Christianity, and speaking the English language in common with the bulk of the people, as well as possessed of superior knowledge, scientific, mechanical, and political) would bring that vast Empire in the East to a level with other large Christian countries in Europe, and by means of its immense riches and extensive population, and by the help which may be reasonably expected from Europe, they (the settlers and their descendants) may succeed sooner or later in enlightening and civilizing the surrounding nations of Asia. "

He then goes on to speak of the disadvantages which may arise from European ideas of racial superiority, difference of climate, etc, all of which, he says, can be remedied or prevented by various means which he himself suggests. He says with regard to the first that European settlers, for the first twenty years at least, should be from among educated persons of character and capital, since such persons are very seldom, if ever, found guilty of intruding upon the religious or national prejudices of persons of uncultivated minds : 2nd, the enactment of equal laws, placing all classes on the same footing as to civil rights,

and the establishment of trial by jury (the jury being composed impartially of both classes), would be felt as a strong check on any turbulent or overbearing characters among Europeans."

He concludes the whole, however, with the following remark which shows that he was not one of those who would leap in the dark, or who would rush in where angels might fear to tread, for it must be remembered that even the most forward among the English were not willing to promote or encourage such settlement; rather they were positively against it, and the Indians too of that day might well be against it:—

"At all events, no one will, I trust, oppose me when I say, that the settlement in India by Europeans should at least be undertaken experimentally, so that its effects may be ascertained by actual observation on a moderate scale. If the result be such as to satisfy all parties, whether friendly or opposed to it, the measure may then be carried on to a greater extent, till at last it may seem safe and expedient to throw the country open to persons of all classes. On mature consideration, therefore, I think I may safely recommend that educated persons of character and capital should now be permitted and encouraged to settle in India, without any restriction of locality or any liability to banishment, at the discretion of the government and the result of this experiment may serve as a guide in any future legislation on the subject."

The India of the future, such as Rājāh Ram Mohan Roy depicted in this paper of his nearly a

hundred years back, an India which it was the innermost wish of his heart to see rising in course of time, the wish being the father to the thought, is almost if not altogether before us in the New India that we see to-day. This New India is marked out by a number of characteristics such as the spread of arts and industries, of education and enlightenment, the use of the English language as the *lingua franca* by a large number of people, an ever-expanding self-government, a large amount of "opulence, intelligence and public spirit", and a forward look in all things, characteristics which Ram Mohan Roy wanted to see in the India of his heart's desire. But it may be said that all this has been done without the European settlement which he advocated with so much zeal. It is true there has been no such settlement but instead there has been something that is far better and that is the presence and work of the Christian Missions, which have played no small part in the creation of the New India that we see. During the last century hundreds of these mission settlements have risen all over the land, and thousands of European men and women of high character and education have given themselves to the service of this land, specially of the humblest, the poorest and the most miserable thereof. They have started innumerable schools and colleges and hospitals and tried to spread in all the ways they could health, comfort, light and culture. In an especial degree they have been the friends of the poor and the humble and the outcast, and have tried their utmost to improve their lot and to defend them from those of their own brethren who were better placed by the mere fact of

their birth. By raising these people whose number is millions in the scale of life, they have raised a dead-weight from the very heart of the Indian nation, which would have remained pressed down but for that ages more and would have hardly dared even to speak of freedom. They have brought with them large sums of money for the use of the Indian people without expecting any return except in the shape of more happiness, comfort and larger life among those for whom all this money has been spent. Thus there have been realized all the advantages which Ram Mohan Roy expected as the result of European settlement in India, and many more, and what is still more important is that India has not suffered from a single one of those disadvantages which it would have inevitably owing to such settlement. While the European settlers would have been at least masters if not lords, the missionaries have been more of friends if not servants of the people. Besides any European settlement that was not large enough to be a chief and ruling interest in the land, (in which latter case it would have been a far greater evil inasmuch as it would have created a new ruling caste which would have tried to keep the people of the land always under itself as the Aryan conquerors of India did with the Non-Aryans), would have been of the nature of commercial exploitation, and the European settlers would have always looked upon India as a field for making money which they might well spend in Europe and America just as a number of even Indian princes and millionaires are doing in these days. From all these evils the missions have been quite free, and they have done all the good they could do with motives as disinterested

as it is possible for human agencies to have. Moreover they represent not only one nation as the settlers would have largely done, but the whole of Europe and America, and that too almost in the best phase of European civilization and character. However, it has been said against them in the past and may be said in the future that they do require change of faith on the part of most of those whom they would succour and give help to, and that it is a serious disadvantage. Even granting that it is an evil, especially from the national point of view, it must not be forgotten that it is an evil mixed with a great amount of good, for the majority of their converts, most of whom are from the lower and the lowest classes of Indians, while changing their faith from what can hardly be called Hinduism but is only primitive fetichism and worship of lower gods to Christianity leave behind them darkest superstition, often allied with rank ignorance and immorality. Besides, it must be remembered that in bringing Christianity to India, the Missions bring what is the best in the European civilization, which is the very salt that preserveth it and without which it would have been something awful and monstrous, and what is moreover of Asiatic origin. The Mission-work carried on by the people of Europe and America in Asiatic countries including India ought always to remind Europeans and Americans of their great and incalculable indebtedness in what they consider to be and what is rightly the best in their life and civilization to Asia, and the Asiatics ought to respect at least, even if they cannot accept wholly, what is thus brought to them as their own. It is these

Missions which are meant to be in a pre-eminent degree so many inter-national and inter-continental Euro-Asian bonds of union, and to rise altogether above all national interests whatsoever. It may be said, and with justice, that they are often playing a part which is subsidiary and secondary, if not directly instrumental, to the interests of the various nations which they represent. This is because, unfortunately all human agencies after all partake of the weakness and frailty that are inherent in human nature, and they form no exception to that rule. However, in these days, in spite of all their defects it is these Christian Missions scattered all over Asia and Africa that form the chiefest, if not the only agency, that makes for the fraternal union of *all* nations and peoples upon this globe of ours. A still further step may be taken in course of time by Missions and Missionaries, and some day we may have instead of the missionaries who come and go like birds of passage having their base and home elsewhere in other lands a class of men who may be called missionary-settlers, who may make the lands they go to their home and be one with the people they work amongst, not only religiously but even socially and nationally. When this is done at first by individuals who have the courage to take a forward step and then by little communities in the spirit of such people as the Moravians, that wonderful little body of Christians almost every one of whom, whether man or woman, was a missionary, a new day may dawn for both Asia and Europe, bringing their much wished for union nearer its realization, and a new chapter may be opened in the evangelization of the whole

world. These missionary-settlers from Europe into Asia would be true apostles of Christ not only to Asia but to Europe also, for it would be in Asia that they would receive a new understanding of the teachings of their Master and Lord who was after all an Asiatic and who as such could not be altogether unrelated, in however hidden and mysterious a manner, to those under-currents of Asiatic life which have made its civilization, in spite of all its vastness, variety and heterogeneity, one in character and given it, *i.e.*, Asia, to be the mother of all the religions of the world, and after being inspired with this new light they would go back to their original lands and would preach to the people there such new light and inspiration. With the advent of a larger number of such missionary-settlers as Robert de Nobili and his successors in the past and men like Andrews and Stokes in the present will come a true Euro-Asian unity, a larger and truer Christianity, and the Kingdom of Heaven will be nearer than ever.

But Ram Mohan Roy's aim was indeed more of a secular character, and that is why he was anxious to have the European settler of 'the landlord type. He was under any circumstances eager to see in India the same sort of civil and religious liberty that was enjoyed by the people of such countries as England, France and America, and he welcomed European settlement as perhaps one of the best means for the reproduction of the same in India. This can be seen from the way in which he was watching the struggle that was taking place in England at that very time between forces of liberty and of reaction. To him the Reform Bill of the year 1833 meant the triumph or fall of the liberal principles, on which

depended, as he wrote to somebody at that time, "the welfare of England, nay of the world". To another he wrote in connection with the same:—"The struggles are not merely between the reformers and anti-reformers, but between liberty and oppression throughout the world, between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong. But from a reflection on the past events of history, we clearly perceive that liberal principles in politics and religion have been long gradually but steadily gaining ground, notwithstanding the opposition and obstinacy of despots and bigots." When the Bill was finally passed, he wrote to a friend as follows:—

"I am *now* happy to find myself fully justified in congratulating you and my other friends at Liverpool on the *complete* success of the Reform Bill, notwithstanding the violent opposition and want of political principle on the part of the aristocrats. The nation can no longer be a prey of the few who used to fill their purses at the expense, nay, to the ruin of the people, for a period of upwards of fifty years.....As I publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated I would renounce my connection with this country, I refrained from writing to you or any other friend in Liverpool until I knew the result. Thank Heaven I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow-subjects, and heartily rejoice that I have the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay, of the whole world."

To Ram Mohan Roy, the cause of Liberty, was one all over the world, and in its triumph in one land



he saw the triumph thereof all over the world. So enthusiastic was he in this cause that he even went to the length of telling the English people that in case the Bill did not pass he would renounce his connection with them, and probably go over to the United States as was stated then. Ram Mohan Roy was too earnest to say what he did not want to do, and possibly he may have thought of being a French citizen acquiring all the rights of citizenship under the banner of that free and liberty-loving land. This alone will show how great his love of liberty was and how he was prepared to do anything to promote the cause thereof.

Now that Rajah Ram Mohan Roy was satisfied that he could continue to be a member of the British Empire without his self-respect being wounded, we find him going to France on a friendly visit to that country for which he had so much admiration. Unfortunately we know very little as to how long he stayed there and how he found that country and its people. It is said that "he was more than once at the table of Louis Philippe", the liberal king of France, which means that he came to know the highest society of Paris at close quarters. From France he thought of going to Italy and Austria, but gave up the idea as it was essential to know French in order to travel in Europe with any appreciable advantage in those days when the French language was the *lingua franca* of Europe to a far larger extent than it now is.

Meanwhile the mission or missions which brought him to England were being fulfilled one by one. The pension that was given to the Mogul Emperor had been substantially increased, and the appeal against the

abolition of Suttee was finally rejected by the Imperial authorities, Ram Mohan Roy himself being present at the time of this decision. To him who had worked so hard for the abolition of that most inhuman and cruel rite, it must have been no ordinary occasion for heart-felt thanksgiving to God Almighty. The India Bill was being discussed in both the Houses, and it kept Ram Mohan Roy very busy and confined to London for months in the Year 1833. It was finally passed in the month of August. The Bill as it stood when it was passed was hardly satisfactory to him, and moreover it was a cause of disappointment to him not only for the sake of his own country but also for the sake of the reformed Parliament of which he had expected much more. As a political reformer he was a "moderate one" (and being the pioneer in politics he could not be anything else in those days) as was said about him soon after his death in an article in the *Asiatic Journal*, and therefore most of his suggestions for the reform of the Government in India were quite mild, but even then much heed was not paid to them. Soon after this Bill received the Royal assent Ram Mohan Roy left London for Bristol, and while there his health failed suddenly and there came the end.





## CHAPTER XIV

### RELIGIOUS SYMPATHIES AND AFFINITIES.

It has already been seen how interested Ram Mohan Roy was in the political institutions of Europe and especially those of England and what attitude he held towards them. He was already impressed by a number of things that he saw while in England, such as the love for liberty among all classes of people, higher culture among the upper classes and "especially the female virtue and excellence", besides "intelligence, riches and power, manners, customs", etc. The question may very well be asked as to what interest he took in the religious side of the English life and how he was impressed by it. Religion was always the uppermost thing in all his life in India and he could not be indifferent to it while in England.

As regards this it has been already said how he was received and welcomed by the Unitarians soon after his coming to England. They remained true to him and he to them all the time he was in England, a period extending over two years. He found among them a number of friends and he was always a welcome guest with many of them. In his last days when he was financially embarrassed owing to money not being sent to him regularly from India, it was the Unitarian friends of his who stood loyal to him. He had undoubtedly till the last moment of his life much more in common with them than with any other body of religious people, whether in India or in England. His testimony to the truth of Unitarian Christianity as he gave it years ago in India has been already

recorded. In his reply to the welcome-address given to him by the Unitarians in England he had said:—

“I am not sensible that I have done anything to deserve being called a promoter of this cause; but with respect to your faith I may observe, that I too believe in the one God, and that I believe in almost all the doctrines that you do: but I do this for my own salvation and for my own peace. For the objects of your Society I must confess that I have done very little to entitle me to your gratitude or such admiration of my conduct. What have I done? I do not know what I have done. If I have ever rendered you any services, they must be very trifling—very trifling I am sure. I laboured under many disadvantages. In the first instance, the Hindus and the Brahmins, to whom I am related, are all hostile to the cause: and even many Christians there are more hostile to our common cause than the Hindus and Brahmins. I have honour for the appellation of Christian: but they always tried to throw difficulties and obstacles in the way of the principles of Unitarian Christianity. I have found some of these here, but more there.....However if this be the true system of Christianity, it will prevail notwithstanding all the opposition that may be made to it. Scripture seconds your system of religion, common sense is always on your side.”

However at the same welcome-meeting, one Rev. W. J. Fox said among other things:—

“The Rajah remarked to me the other day, with somewhat an indignant feeling, that he had been shown a painting of Christ, and that the

painter was false, for he had given him the pale European countenance, not remembering that Jesus Christ was an oriental. The criticism was just. Those theologians have painted falsely too who have portrayed Christianity as a cold and intellectual religion, and not given it that rich oriental colouring of fancy and of feeling with which the Scriptures glow, and by which they possess themselves not only of the mind but the heart and soul of man."

Although this is true to a certain extent of the whole of Western Christianity, it is much more so with regard to Unitarian Christianity. And hence whatever be his intellectual sympathies with Unitarianism, Ram Mohan Roy seems to have kept what may be called an open mind, and was even favourably impressed by the various forms of Christianity that he saw in England, particularly the Evangelical side of the Established Church. With regard to this attitude of his, Dr. Carpenter, a Unitarian leader who came to know Ram Mohan Roy closely says:—

"While in London.....it was his system so far to avoid identifying himself with any religious body, as to make himself answerable for their acts and opinions and he also wished to hear preachers of other denominations who had acquired a just celebrity. He appears to have most frequented the church of Rev. Dr. Kenny who peculiarly interested him by the Christian spirit and influence of his discourse."

Ram Mohan Roy came in course of time to call this gentleman his "parish priest", and he was

charmed with his "benignity, charity, liberality to the creeds of others, and honesty in the great political struggle for reform."

The Rev. William Jay of Bath, an Anglican preacher whom Ram Mohan Roy heard preach once and with whom he had some talks goes even to the length of saying that "from subsequent intercourse, as also from the testimony of others, he is persuaded that though at his first embracing Christianity he was Unitarian in his views, he was after he came to this country a sincere and earnest enquirer after evangelical truth, and would have professed his adoption of it had he not been prematurely removed by death."

Another minister of the Established Church, while dedicating to him one of his sermons on "Charity, the greatest of the Christian graces", says among other things in the dedication the following:—

"Rajah, never shall I forget the long and profoundly interesting conversation which passed between us a few days ago.....Nor will the noble declaration fade from my recollection, that you were not only ready to sacrifice station, property and even life itself to the advancement of a religion which in its genuine purity and simplicity proved its descent from the God of Love.....but that you should consider the abstaining from such a course as the non-performance of one of the Highest Duties imposed upon rational, social and accountable man.....May God prosper your benevolent endeavours to spread.....the knowledge of Christ and the practice of Christian Charity."



But it was not the Established Church of England, which contained in it some of the best of men noted for their piety and learning in England, that alone impressed him very much. One is surprised and at the same time gratified to learn that Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, the great iconoclast and Hindu protestant reformer that he was, is not blind to the many excellencies of the Roman Church. He even defends it against the criticisms and attacks of many of his Christian friends, whether Trinitarian or Unitarian. He was anxious to see the faith and life of the people who professed Roman Catholicism in Italy itself, its head quarters, but he had to give up the idea later on as he did not know either Italian or French. The following passage which is taken from a letter of one Mr. T. Boots to Mr. Estlin shows very well what attitude his was towards the Roman Church :—

“I called with him on Dr. Tuckerman, (the originator of domestic missions) of America, and when he had shaken hands with him (and others who were with him) he said, with his countenance lighted up by animation, “I am so happy to be with Unitarians.” He did not move in the sect as some expected, and reflections were often passed upon him. Mr. Fox has touched this with admirable force in his sermon. One of his greatest desires was to see Catholicism at Rome. He admired the obedience to duties in the Catholics, and always spoke of them in this light with admiration. Whatever faults were mixed with their faith, he recognised in their attention to the poor and sick, the noblest spirit of Christianity. One of the last arguments I heard from him was

his defence of them, against one who urged their acting under an artificial stimulus. He contended that what they did was enforced on all, by the very example of Christ and that the stimulus was their faith in the force and truth of that example."

It was in this way that Ram Mohan Roy kept his eyes open on all sides, and saw the good points of the various Christian Churches. His was a catholic spirit and temper, and hence he was free from those prejudices and prepossessions which are common to the ordinary man, and which make him blind to the good in things outside his limited fold. But though Ram Mohan Roy did not fail to notice all that was good and great, in practice at least if not in doctrine, in the various systems of the Christian faith, his own personal faith as he gave expression to it in the last weeks of his life to friends in private and public was Unitarian in its intellectual character, though he was not quite satisfied with Unitarianism being so exclusively rational. During these last days of his, he is reported to have said to Rev. John Foster, who himself bears witness to this fact in a letter that he wrote to Dr. Lant Carpenter after Ram Mohan's death, "that he avowed his belief, unequivocally, in the resurrection of Christ, and in the Christian miracles generally; at the same time he said that the internal evidence of Christianity had been the most decisive of his conviction." Dr. Jerrard, the Principal of the Bristol College, also wrote to the same that (i) "Ram Mohan Roy expressed his belief in the divine authority of Jesus Christ as an inspired teacher of righteousness, and an accredited messenger of God. (ii) He explicitly

declared that he believed in the miracles of Christ generally, and particularly in his resurrection, which he said was the foundation of the Christian faith, and the great fact on which he rested his own hopes of a resurrection." Mr. Estlin, a Unitarian gentleman whom Ram Mohan Roy had known long since having corresponded with him for years while he was in India, wrote in his diary only a few days before Ram Mohan's death that the latter had declared that "he denied the Divinity of Christ, but distinctly asserted his belief in the Divine Mission of Christ." Mrs. Estlin, from the information that she had from Miss Hare, the daughter of David Hare the great educationist of Calcutta, who was staying with him during these last days and acting as his nurse, wrote that "The Rajah read the Scriptures daily in Hebrew and Greek. Miss Hare often read them to him also; this was never omitted at night. He was also in a constant habit of prayer."

There was a controversy even after his death among his English friends as to whether he was Unitarian or Trinitarian in his belief while in England. Of course, even while he was in India he was spoken of as an "illustrious convert to Christianity," "an excellent Indian Christian and philosopher," "convert from Hinduism to Christianity" etc. As early as 1824, Sismondi, a French writer, in the *Revue Encyclopedique*, said with regard to him among other things: "He is among them, by a much juster title than the Missionaries, the Apostle of Christianity." But all this was understood more in reference to Unitarian than to Orthodox Christianity. Did he undergo any real change in his opinions and beliefs concerning the

Christian truth after his coming to England? Some said he did, while others said he did not. It must be said that there was no such fundamental change in his faith as to justify those who said that Ram Mohan Roy was like them an orthodox Christian, though there is not the least doubt that his enthusiasm for Unitarianism had waned a good deal, and his aversion to orthodox Christianity which was so great and intense in Calcutta was changed into positive admiration for the great excellences of heart and spirit that he found among orthodox Christians. With regard to this what has been written by Mr. Sandford Arnot, a man who knew Ram Mohan Roy in Calcutta where he was acting as an assistant editor of the *Journal* which was suppressed and whence he was deported, and who had worked as Ram Mohan's Secretary in England, is worthy of notice. He says:—

“As he advanced in age, he became more strongly impressed with the importance of religion to the welfare of society, and the pernicious effects of scepticism. In his younger years, his mind had been deeply struck with the evils of believing too much, and against that he directed all his energies: but in his later days he began to feel that there was as much, if not greater, danger in the tendency to believe too little.”

This is worthy of notice with regard to the general tendency of Ram Mohan Roy's religious thinking which became more and more positive as he grew in years. So much was this the case that he was very much disconcerted at seeing the prevalence of scepticism and infidelity in England and France. He strongly disapproved of people talking of their doubts

of Christianity or about the existence of God in the presence of women, and declared that if he were settled in Europe with his family, he would introduce them to none but religious people. As regards his attitude towards Unitarianism, Mr. Arnot says:—

“ He evidently now began to suspect that the Unitarian form of Christianity was too much rationalized (or sophisticated, perhaps, I may say) to be suitable to human nature. He remarked in the Unitarians a want of that fervour of zeal and devotion found among other Sects, and felt doubts whether a system appealing to reason only was calculated to produce a permanent influence on mankind.”

From this and other testimony we learn that Ram Mohan Roy was getting more and more into that frame of mind where between believing too much and too little, one chooses the former, and accordingly he was getting more and more interested in Trinitarian Christianity which he had at first condemned hailing Unitarianism as a victory of “simple precepts”. It may be that it was the difference that he found between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians that led him to be in favour of believing too much which is only another name for orthodoxy, a difference that has led many others also in the same way, making them prefer Trinitarianism to Unitarianism, which last is after all richer in negations than in affirmations. The words “By their fruits ye shall judge them” have been always the truest test of the discipleship of Jesus Christ, and “the fruits” may have weighed more and more with Ram Mohan Roy in his declining days than mere arguments and doctrines.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE END.

Rajah Ram Mohan Roy's work in England was finished. We do not know what he intended to do after this, or how much longer he wanted to stay in England. Probably before he had time to make any plans, he became seriously ill at Bristol where he was staying with some friends. The illness proved to be brain fever, and although all that could be done was done for him and he was tended by loving friends with whom he was staying, the disease took a fatal turn. On the 27th of September, 1833, Ram Mohan Roy breathed his last, the last word that was heard from his mouth being "*Aum*". It was thus that the spirit of the great Hindu Reformer passed away in a foreign land and amongst a foreign people.

The funeral that took place was of the simplest kind, and it was in the solemnity of sincere sorrow and silent prayers of a few friends that the earthly remains of the Rajah were consigned to the grave. It was thought absolutely essential that the ceremony should not seem in any the least way to be Christian, for that would have prejudiced the cause of his legitimate successors in their right to his property, apart from the harm it would have done to the various reform movements that he had started. Besides the Rajah himself had expressed a wish that in case he died in England, "a small piece of freehold ground might be purchased for his burying place, and a cottage be built on it for the gratuitous residence of some respectable poor person, to take charge of it." Such a place was supplied free of any charge by

Miss Castle, a young English lady and a ward of Dr. Carpenter, in whose mansion called Stapleton Grave Ram Mohan Roy had breathed his last, and it was there that he was interred in the middle of the month of October, 1833. About a decade after, his remains were removed from there to the cemetery of Arno's Vale in the neighbourhood of Bristol. It was there that Dwarka Nath Tagore, (the grand father of Ravindra Nath Tagore) who had been a great friend of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, erected a tomb of stone and in 1872, the following inscription was put thereupon :—

“ Beneath this stone rest the remains of Rajah  
Ram Mohan Roy,

A conscientious and steadfast believer in the  
Unity of the Godhead :

He consecrated his life with entire devotion  
to the worship of the Divine Spirit alone.

To great natural talents he united a thorough  
mastery of many languages,

And early distinguished himself as one of the  
greatest scholars of his day.

His unwearied labours to promote the social, moral and physical condition of the people of India, his earnest endeavours to suppress idolatry and the rite of Suttee, and his constant zealous advocacy of whatever tended to advance the Glory of God and the welfare of man, live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen.”

Immediately after his death, there were a number of notices of the death of the great Indian in the various papers of England, and several funeral

sermons were preached in various churches, Anglican, Presbyterian and Unitarian, all testifying to the greatness and goodness of Ram Mohan Roy who had made a number of friends among people of all classes and creeds during his stay in England.

Even sonnets, poems and hymns were written in his memory by Misses Harriet Martineau, Mary Carpenter, Dale and Acland. The universal feeling that was aroused in the mind of all who knew him there was that they had lost in him not only an extraordinary man but a personal friend, so much he had endeared himself to the people among whom he lived. All spoke very highly of his great gifts, especially in the realm of intellect, and his modesty, and humility and delicacy of feeling and manner towards women in particular were the special features of his character noted by all. Miss Carpenter wrote in his own life-time in 1831 to the great American Unitarian, Dr. Channing, these words:—

“In the interval of politics we talk of the Christian Brahmin, Ram Mohan Roy. All accounts agree in representing him as a person of extraordinary merit. With very great intelligence and ability, he unites modesty and simplicity which win all hearts.”

One Mrs. Davidson who had named one of her children Ram Mohan Roy, a child whose god-father he had become, said:—

“For surely never was there a man of so much modesty and humility. I used to feel quite ashamed of the reverential manner in which he behaved to me. Had I been our Queen, I could not have been approached and taken leave of with more respect.”



Dr. T. Boot, evidently a Unitarian gentleman, in writing to Mr. Estlin soon after Ram Mohan Roy's death, said :—

“To me he stood alone in the single majesty of, I had almost said perfect humanity. No one in past history or in the present time ever came before my judgment clothed in such wisdom, grace and humility.....I have often talked with him on religious subjects, and have seen him among sceptics. He was never more free and unembarrassed and cheerful than when arguing with those who had a logical and acute mind. He often told me that he always introduced the subject when he met the historian of India (this was probably James Mill) and that his object in the argument was to show the insufficiency of human reason for the production of the highest moral worth, and the highest happiness. He even contended that ‘the spirit that was in Christ Jesus and unknown and unrevealed till his mission, directed the human mind to more elevated, purer and more disinterested thoughts, motives and actions, than the noblest philosophy of antiquity did or could do, that the Christian precepts left nothing to desire or to hope for through futurity, that, as a system of morality, it was alone able to lead to purity and happiness here and to form the mind for any conceivable state of mind hereafter’.....He argued only for the sense of religious obligation, and emphatically assured us that all his experience of life had exhibited to him virtue and self-respect and happiness in its true elements, even in proportion to the intensity of that sense. He was the humblest of human

beings, and ardent as he was in the faith of his selection he was sensibly disturbed if religion was spoken lightly of, or argued but irreverentially before women. He would often smile and speak jocosely when the turn of the discussion made him uneasy from his sensibilities towards women being awakened; and those who knew him, saw by his manners and looks that he adopted this lightness of manner in hope that the subject would be dropped.....I can only say that at every visit my admiration of him grew with my intimacy with his mind and actions. He was the most liberal, the most amiable, the most candid of men. His generosity was unbounded: his most touching politeness was an instinct of his nature, it never left him to his most familiar associates....."

Another correspondent of Dr. Channing, Miss Lucy Aikin wrote of him :—

"He is indeed a glorious being,—a true sage, as it appears, with the genuine humility of the character, and with more fervour, more sensibility, a more engaging tenderness of heart than any class of character can justly claim."

His person has been described by the Court Journal, October 5, 1833, which was perhaps the next issue after Ram Mohan's death as follows :

"The Rajah, in the outer man, was cast in nature's finest mould: his figure was manly and robust: his carriage dignified, the forehead towering, expansive and commanding: the eyes dark, restless, full of brightness and animation, yet liquid and benevolent, and frequently glistening

with a tea\ when affected by the deeper sensibility of the heart: the nose of Roman form and proportions: lips full and indicative of independence, the whole features deeply expressive, with a smile of soft and peculiar fascination which won irresistably the suffrages to whom it was addressed. His manners were characterized by suavity blended with dignity, varying towards either point according to the company in which he might be placed. To ladies his politeness was marked by the most delicate manner, and his felicitous mode of paying them a compliment gained him very many admirers among the high-born beauties of Europe. In conversation with individuals of every rank and of various nations and professions, he passed with the utmost ease from one language to another, suiting his remarks to each and all in excellent taste and commanding the astonishment and respect of his hearers."

"It was in argument, however, that this exalted Brahmin was most conspicuous. He seemed to grapple with truth intuitively, and called in invective, raillery, sarcasm, and sometimes a most brilliant wit to aid him in confuting his opponent: if precedent was necessary, a remarkably retentive memory and extensive reading in many languages supplied with a copious fund; and at times with a rough, unsparing and ruthless hand he burst asunder the meshes of sophistry, error and bigotry, in which it might be attempted to entangle him."

One of the best of these personal impressions is the one given by Mr. Adam, the same who had worked

with Ram Mohan Roy for several years in the cause of Unitarianism, in a lecture of his on the Life and Labours of the Rajah, several years after his death. He says:—

“I was never more thoroughly, deeply, and constantly impressed than when in the presence of Ram Mohan Roy and in friendly and confidential converse with him, that I was in the presence of a man of natural and inherent genius, of powerful understanding, and of determined will, a will determined with singular energy and uncontrollable self-direction, to lofty and generous purposes. He seemed to feel, to think, to speak, to act, as if he could not but do all this, and that he must do it only in and from and through himself, and that the application of any external influence, distinct from his own strong will, would be the annihilation of his being and identity. He would be free or not be at all.....Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul—freedom not of action merely, but of thought.....This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied by a very nice perception of the equal right of others, even of those who differed most widely from him.”

Since then, during the last century, posterity has done full justice to him, and to-day he stands before the whole of India by universal acceptance and acclamation as the Father of Modern India. But of all the estimates that have been made of him, perhaps none is so carefully weighed and true to facts as the one given at the end of his excellent English biography,

which sums up much of the meaning of Ram Mohan Roy's life and work. It stands as follows:—

“Ram Mohan Roy stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch that spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and Science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, Theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenment. ....He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilizations,—he embodies its freedom of inquiry, its thirst for science, its large humane sympathies, its pure and sifted ethics: along with its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past, and prudent, even timid disinclination towards revolt. But in the life of Ram Mohan we see what we hope yet to have shown us in the progress of India, that the secret of the whole movement is religious. Amid all his wanderings Ram Mohan was saved by his faith.....He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock; in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock. The Rajah was no merely occidentalized Oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a

spiritual Eurasian. If we follow the right line of his development we shall find that he leads the way from the Orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly larger and nobler than both. He preserves continuity throughout, by virtue of his religion, which again supplied the motive force of his progressive movement. The power that connected and restrained, as well as widened and impelled, was religion. Ram Mohan thus presents a most instructive and inspiring study for the New India of which he is the type and pioneer.....There can be little doubt that, whatever future the destinies may have in store for India, that future will be largely shaped by the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy. And not the future of India alone. We stand on the eve of an unprecedented intermingling of East and West. The European and the Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a confluence which bids fair to form the one ocean-river of the collective progress of mankind. In the presence of that great Eastern Question, with its infinite ramifications, industrial, political, moral and religious, the international problems of passing hour, even the gravest of them, seem dwarfed into parochial pettiness. The nearing dawn of these unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life-story we have told. He was, if not the prophetic type at least the precursive hint, of the change that is to come."



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